

CTX

Volume 10, No. 1 2020



ISSN 2162-6421 (online)
Spring 2020



CTX

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Letter from the Editor

As I write, the world is in the grip of a global terror the likes of which we haven't seen in four generations. Only this time, the terrorists are not angry men with guns and bombs hiding out in sleeper cells, but microscopic viruses that spread swiftly and invisibly and kill just as randomly. Fortunately, there are heroes all across the world, armed with ventilators, masks, and medicines who are putting themselves on the line to save the lives of others. May they—and we—all stay safe.

Even ISIS has warned its adherents not to travel to Europe for fear of the coronavirus. Time out for global terrorism while people desert public spaces for the relative safety of isolation at home. And yet we can be sure that when the trains and planes move normally again, and people gratefully resume gathering in clubs, stadiums, and arenas to celebrate the end of the coronavirus terror, the angry men with guns and bombs will be back, refreshed, revitalized, and ready to take up where they left off. What we don't know is what the world will look like when we finally emerge from this seemingly dark and scary place we have now entered.

It was less than three years ago that the Battle of Mosul, in northern Iraq, and the Battle of Marawi, on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, drove ISIS and its followers from cities they had infiltrated and occupied during their precipitous rise. In this issue of *CTX*, we start with a reminiscence by Colonel (Ret.) Ian Rice about his work with Iraqi tribal leaders in Ninewa to support Operation Inherent Resolve, the Iraqi-led coalition campaign to dislodge ISIS from Mosul. Rice offers an unusual perspective on the many actors and interests that competed for position behind the scenes of the main fight against ISIS.

Next, the *CTX* interview brings you Lieutenant Colonel Kåre Jakobsen, commander of the Danish special forces unit known as the Jaegercorps, who spoke with Dr. Troels Henningsen in spring 2019. Jakobsen offers his perspective on working in an international coalition and describes the mission he led in 2016–2017 to train an Iraqi tribal militia in Anbar Province in preparation for Operation Inherent Resolve.

Moving from the battlefield to the computer lab, the next article, by Major Marcelle Burrone and Dr. Sean Everton, uses social network analysis (SNA) to depict the social and kinship networks of the US-based ISIS cell known as the Minnesota Six. The authors demonstrate that careful use of SNA can reveal insights into a terrorist network's vulnerabilities that might not be obvious through other kinds of analysis.

We then present two special interviews for you. Dr. Douglas Borer interviewed Major General Eduardo Zapateiro, commander of the Colombian Army's Joint Special Operations Command, and Lieutenant General (Ret.) Danilo G. Pamona, who commanded Philippine forces in the Battle of Marawi. Both discuss their roles in combating violent insurgencies in their countries. While extremists have retreated in Colombia and the Philippines for the time being, Zapateiro and Pamona warn that unless governments address the underlying social causes of insurgency, this reprieve will be only temporary.

The Ethics and Insights column features a lecture by Dr. Paul Bloomfield on "The Philosophy of Courage," given to students and faculty of the US Naval Postgraduate School. Dr. Bloomfield begins with a brief history of Western thinking about courage and offers some unusual insights on the nature of courage aimed at the warfighter both on and off the battlefield.

Finally, we're happy to welcome a new occasional columnist, Captain Yuri Sepp, who borrows the mantle of *CTX* movie reviewer from his father Kalev Sepp to take a critical look at *Hotel Mumbai*. Hollywood turns "India's 9/11," the chaotic and horrific four-day terrorist attack on the city of Mumbai, into two hours of digestible and heart-wrenching personal stories. Along with all the drama, Sepp notes, there are lessons for CT professionals to glean.

Don't miss the latest offerings from JSOU in our Publications section.

As our regular readers know, *CTX* is written by professionals like you for the global professional CT community. We urge our readers to become contributors. All submissions are reviewed by peer professionals for quality of content and analysis. English as a second language is not a barrier to publication. If you have a paper, a draft article, or an idea that you think might be a good fit for the journal, or you just want to check in with us about something you read in *CTX*, send an email to CTXSubmit@GlobalECCO.org

Meanwhile, my best wishes go out to all of you. May you, your families, and your communities stay healthy and safe. Write to me and tell me your stories.

Elizabeth Skinner
Editor, CTX

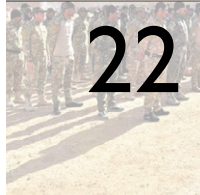
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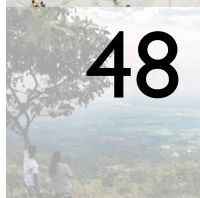
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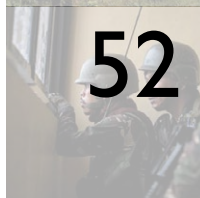
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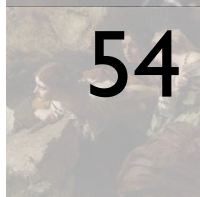
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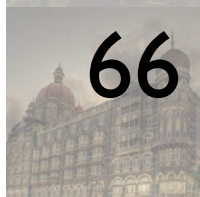
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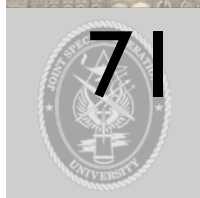
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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Paul Bloomfield received his PhD in philosophy in 1995 and has taught at the University of Arizona and at McGill University. He is currently a professor of philosophy at the University of Connecticut and his areas of specialty are moral philosophy and metaphysics. His publications include: “Justice as a Self-Regarding Virtue,” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 72, no. 1 (January 2011); *A Theory of the Good Life* (Oxford University Press [OUP], 2014) and, as editor, *Morality and Self Interest* (OUP, 2008). He and David Copp are currently co-editing *The Oxford Handbook of Moral Realism* (forthcoming).

Dr. Douglas Borer is an associate professor of Defense Analysis at the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, California. He earned his PhD in political science from Boston University in 1993. Dr. Borer's academic postings include the University of the South Pacific, the University of Western Australia, Virginia Tech, the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and the US Army War College. In 2007, he co-founded (with Dr. Nancy Roberts) the Common Operational Research Environment (CORE) Lab at NPS.

Major Marcelle Burroni enlisted in the US Army in April 2002 as a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Specialist and served in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She received her commission in 2007 and transferred to the Civil Affairs branch. MAJ Burroni earned a Master of Science degree in Defense Analysis from NPS in 2018. After graduating, she was assigned to Delta Company 83d Civil Affairs Battalion and served as the Company Operations Chief in support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Global Response Force mission. MAJ Burroni is currently the Company Commander for Bravo Company 83rd Civil Affairs Battalion.

Dr. Sean F. Everton is a professor in the Department of Defense Analysis and the co-director of the CORE Lab at NPS. Prior to joining NPS in 2007, he was an adjunct professor at Santa Clara and Stanford Universities. He earned his MA and PhD in sociology at Stanford University and currently specializes in the use of social network analysis to track and disrupt dark (e.g., criminal and terrorist) networks. His books include *Disrupting Dark Networks* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); with Daniel Cunningham and Phil Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); and *Networks and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Dr. Troels Burchall Henningsen is an assistant professor at the Institute for Strategy at the Royal Danish Defence College in Copenhagen, Denmark. After six years as a lecturer at the Royal Danish Air Force Academy, he earned his PhD in military strategy from Roskilde University in 2018. He specializes in studying the impact of local informal politics and institutions on Western military interventions in Africa and the Middle East. He currently studies the strategic effects of special operations in fragmented societies. Dr. Henningsen is also a political advisor for a multinational special operations component command within NATO's Rapid Reaction Force.

Lieutenant Colonel Kåre Jakobsen is the commander of the Danish Jaegercorps, the Danish land special forces. He was commissioned in the Danish army in 1996 and earned his Jaeger badge in 1998. He served in the Jaegercorps until 2001 and again from 2004 to 2006 as a platoon commander. LTC Jakobsen also served as a staff officer at the Danish Defence Command, and as liaison officer for the Jaegercorps at the Army Command. He earned a master's degree in military studies from the Royal Danish Defence College.

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Danilo Pamonag presently serves as undersecretary of the Philippine government's Department of Social Welfare and Development. He served in the Philippine Army for 38 years and led its Joint Operations Task Force against insurgent militants in the Battle of Zamboanga (2013). During the Battle of Marawi (2017), he was designated the ground commander of the Main Battle Area and later served simultaneously as overall commander of the Joint Task Force Marawi. A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, LTG Pamonag commanded several of the army's elite units and also served in UN peacekeeping operations. He holds master's degrees in business management and public administration.

Ian Rice is a retired US military officer who has served in a variety of overseas assignments at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, most notably in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Korea. His most recent assignment in Iraq is the subject of his essay that appears in this issue.

Captain Yuri Travis Sepp is a communications officer in the US Marine Corps, and currently works as a Joint Testing Officer with Joint Interoperability Test Command. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2004 as a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Defense Specialist, attended UCLA on a Navy ROTC scholarship, and was commissioned in 2011. He deployed to Camp Fallujah, Iraq, with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Element from 2006 to 2007.

Major General Eduardo Zapateiro is the commander of the Colombian Army's Comando Conjunto Operaciones Especiales (Joint Special Operations Command).

COVER PHOTO

Men stand in a queue in the liberated district of Hay Samah, on the eastern outskirts of Mosul, Iraq, after the rumor that food will be given here. (Photo by Sebastian Backhaus/NurPhoto via Getty Images, 1 December 2016)


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Operation Inherent Resolve:

Observations from Ninewa's Tribal Mobilization Effort

By COL Ian C. Rice, US Army (Ret.)

IMAGINE YOUR RICH UNCLE DIED AND LEFT YOU ENOUGH MONEY TO build a nice house. you have a lot of ideas about what the new house should be like, but you do not have the time or the skills to build such a house by yourself. So you hire a contractor whose job it is to coordinate the work of stone masons, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and other tradesmen. You bring your vision, ideas, questions, and concerns to the contractor, and the contractor translates them into tasks for the tradesmen. The contractor sets the construction schedule so that everyone's work is done at the appropriate time, and supervises the results to be sure that the project meets your satisfaction.

- ◀ A Sunni tribe leader from Mosul celebrates the flight of ISIS from villages south of the city by shooting with a Kalashnikov into the air

I supported the effort to mobilize, train, and support Sunni and ethnic minority militias for the campaign to liberate Mosul.



A U.S. Army M109A6 Paladin conducts a fire mission at Qayyarah West, Iraq, in support of the Iraqi security forces' push toward Mosul, 17 October 2016.

In a similar way, supporting the development of tribal forces to assist an international coalition to stabilize a war-torn country requires skilled intermediaries who know how to develop plans and work with disparate actors to achieve a common goal. This was the role of the Tribal Engagement Coordination Cell (TECC), which served as the coordinating intermediary in support of both the United States' diplomatic mission to Iraq and the military campaign for Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve (hereafter, the coalition) to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (the Islamic State, or ISIS). The sudden violent rise of the Islamic State between 2010 and 2014 had caused the Iraqi people to lose confidence and trust in their own government, so the TECC helped coordinate the mobilization of tribal and minority militias under the National Security Service (NSS) to assist the Iraqi campaign against ISIS. The TECC served as an objective and trusted intermediary between the coalition, the Iraqi government, its agencies, and the various interested groups of the Iraqi people.

Operating from the US Consulate in Erbil province as a member of the TECC, I specifically supported the effort to mobilize, train, and support Sunni and ethnic minority militias for Operation Eagle Strike, the campaign to liberate Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. Mosul had become the symbol of ISIS's rapid, attention-grabbing rise to power back in 2014. As our team worked to develop local militias, we became keenly aware of the competition between actors at every level, from geopolitical policy development down to the on-the-ground tactical execution where the policy's best ideas met reality head-on. Despite our best efforts to "build a house" based on cooperation toward shared goals, the competing political and profit-based agendas of many of these actors often superseded the larger vision of all parties working together to defeat ISIS. This essay describes the work of the TECC leading up to and during Operation Eagle Strike, the range of actors and interests we encountered, and the ways in which these disparate forces worked both toward the same goal and at cross purposes during the operation. It ends with some thoughts about what went wrong from the coalition's perspective, and what lessons can be drawn from the experience for future planning. More specifically, the hard-earned lessons of both seizing urban terrain and understanding the friction caused by multiple actors attempting to achieve competing objectives have value for anyone working in counterinsurgency.

The Role of the TECC

During the 2016–2017 Iraqi-led offensive to liberate Mosul and defeat ISIS within Iraq's borders, the US-led coalition acted in a supporting role, primarily providing airpower, intelligence, and advice to the Iraqi forces. As the synchronizing policy lead for the coalition effort, the US diplomatic mission was the main conduit for negotiations between the Iraqi government, its security arms—the Ministry of Defense/Iraqi Army, the Ministry of Interior/Federal Police, the NSS, and the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS)—and the local populace. By serving specifically with the US diplomatic mission in direct support of the effort to coordinate tribal mobilization rather than with the militarily-focused coalition joint task force, the TECC team was afforded the opportunity to meet and work with numerous actors across northern Iraq. This role also provided us with a unique laboratory to examine how external patrons and their local clients interact to defeat a common enemy.



Members of the Iraqi Federal Police pose for a group photo, Baghdad, Iraq.

Though the TECC was not directly involved with advising and assisting Iraqi assault forces, our role as intermediary also offered us a unique lens through which to observe the tactical execution of the liberation campaign. Through regular attendance at operational updates, the TECC team learned not only how best to support the overall campaign by mobilizing tribal forces, but also how tactical actions were directly influencing the greater geopolitical situation. TECC members were able to observe both the development of US national-level foreign policy concerning Iraq and the tactical implementation of that policy. These experiences confirmed my longstanding belief that Western nations providing military and security assistance to client nations too often fail to account for the importance of local norms. The United States Army Special Operations imperatives include understanding the long-term societal and political implications of policies and actions, yet US-led efforts to develop local irregular militias are often more focused on American and Western allies' expertise than on the actual capabilities and goals of the local clients who are being organized, trained, and equipped for long-term stabilization.¹

Western nations providing military and security assistance to client nations too often fail to account for the importance of local norms.

Supporting the tribal mobilization idea demonstrated one thing above all others: despite being faced with a common enemy, both external actors and their local clients often do not have aligned interests, even when such alignment is essential to achieving a mutually desirable outcome. In Ninewa alone, we had to take into account the interests of the Iraqi central government, the Kurdish Democratic Party, the government of Turkey, and the numerous Sunni and individual ethnic-minority militia leaders in the province. Each tribal leader, for example, wanted to be treated as a favorite and given priority care. Such competition for favor caused friction between the various groups. This was further complicated by the fact that some tribal leaders were courting multiple patrons, such as the Kurds and Turks, in addition to the Americans.

Operation Inherent Resolve: Competing Against a Common Enemy

It would be logical to assume that the Iraqi government controlled the preponderance of military force among the various entities fighting to defeat ISIS in Iraq, and specifically during Operation Eagle Strike to liberate Mosul. This was not at all true. In fact, the Iraqi central government was just one of several major actors

who were conducting military operations inside Iraq to retake Mosul and defeat ISIS. The government's chief rivals were the armed forces of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Turkey, Iran, the US-led coalition of Western nations, several nationalistic Shi'a militias, and a large number of loosely affiliated tribal and minority leaders native to Ninewa, all of whom were vying for control and influence.

The Iraqi security forces supporting Operation Eagle Strike fell into several categories. First, there were four predominately Iraqi Arab forces, each of which represented a ministerial-level arm of the government: the army under the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the federal police under the Ministry of the Interior, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) under the Popular Mobilization Committee, and the Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF), which served as the main fighting arm of the nation's renowned vanguard CTS. The Iraqi Kurdish Region also provided significant forces to support the operation. This complex situation was further complicated by the fact that Iraq also had to contend with Iran's heavy influence, intimidation, and, in some cases, leadership of these formations. Within each of these general categories of organizations, Iran was applying overt or more subtle influence over the leaders of the various forces.

Of all the forces involved in the Mosul campaign, ISOF was the most critical player.

Of all the forces involved in the Mosul campaign, ISOF was the most critical player. Similar to the role it played during the liberation of Ramadi and Fallujah in 2015, ISOF was the primary force in Operation Eagle Strike to seize and hold the kind of complex urban terrain that characterized Mosul. ISOF is a unique element of the Iraqi security forces, and it is the only one to maintain long-standing relationships with US and coalition SOF. These relationships were not the sole cause of ISOF's success in Anbar and later during the Mosul offensive, but it was evident that ISOF's commando battalions were organized, trained, and equipped to conduct operations on the model of their US and coalition counterparts. On the one hand, this made ISOF a very specialized commando-style raiding force that could strike precisely with little warning. On the other hand, such a capability became an intoxicating panacea for Iraq's political and military leadership, who deployed the force as an urban operations assault infantry rather than reserving it for special operations.² Unfortunately, ISOF's small commando units and particular tactical methods were not suitable for assault infantry operations because of the large number of casualties such operations cause, a fact that had been apparent during prior operations in Anbar and in the Ninewa campaign. By January 2017, after the Iraqi government determined ISOF was combat ineffective, CTS relinquished the lead assault role to the Interior Ministry's Emergency Response Division.

While ISOF was the force of choice to seize urban terrain, at great cost to itself, in the opening weeks of Operation Eagle Strike, the Iraqi Army was relegated to the supporting role of holding terrain. The army's collapse during the Islamic State's rapid advance across north and western Iraq in 2014 left the Iraqi government with little confidence in its conventional ground forces. Despite billions of dollars and years of US-led training, the Iraqi Army essentially walked away from the fight against ISIS, allowing the militant group to advance largely uncontested. The collapse of the ground forces also set the stage for the rise of the Popular Mobilization Forces as a viable opponent that was willing to fight ISIS—whether for Iraq, Shi'a Islam, or Iran. The PMF demonstrated that a makeshift Arab Iraqi force was capable of fighting ISIS, unlike the Army. Unfortunately, the Iraqi Army's inability to rebuild people's confidence in it persisted throughout the



An Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service soldier practices tactical reloads for the M4 rifle as part of the CTS' advanced training near Baghdad, Iraq, 8 November 2016. Operation Inherent Resolve.

liberation campaign and came at a great cost in ISOF and, later on, Ministry of Interior Emergency Response Division casualties during the lengthy offensive across Mosul.

In addition to the Iraqi central government's institutional forces arrayed to help liberate Mosul, Kurdish Peshmerga also assisted in the campaign, working primarily to clear areas to the east of the city in the mixed minority communities of the Ninewa Plains. Here and to the north of Mosul city, the combined forces of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) controlled a defensive line that ran from the Syrian border east to the Ninewa Plains, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), a political faction rival to the KDP, controlled the line generally south through Kirkuk Province. Both of these politically aligned Kurdish militias, along with US-funded Ministry of Peshmerga forces, participated in the initial phases of Operation Eagle Strike to help isolate Mosul from the north and east.³ The Iraqi Kurdistan region has governed itself, with US assistance, since 1991, so here again the Iraqi government did not have the monopoly of force within its own borders. Only after lengthy negotiations between the Iraqi central government, the Kurdish leadership, and the US-led coalition in the weeks leading up to the 19 October launch of the operation did Kurdish leaders authorize the Peshmerga to support Operation Eagle Strike's objectives.

Beyond these two types of institutionalized and state-sponsored security forces, the campaign to defeat ISIS also led Iraq to host several militias outside of the control of the Ministries of Defense and Interior. In 2014, as ISIS pushed rapidly toward Baghdad, Grand Ayatollah Sistani, a Shi'a and staunch Iraqi nationalist, issued a fatwa on 13 June calling on citizens to defend Iraq and stop the advance on Baghdad.⁴ The result was an estimated 65,000-strong Shi'a militia known as the *Hashd al-Sha'abi* (commonly called the Popular Mobilization Force, or PMF).⁵ Drawn from all walks of life and professions across the predominately Shi'a southern provinces, the PMF quickly became the only viable resistance to ISIS. With the initial defense of Baghdad, the PMF and Iranian advisors quickly stabilized the front in Anbar, and began operations in Diyala and Salah ad-Din provinces to regain control of them from ISIS. By October 2016, the PMF was

Iraqi ISOF soldier in the Old City district where heavy fighting continued



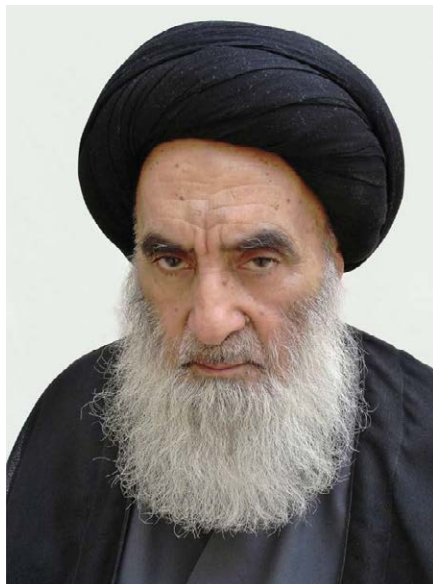
poised to enter Ninewa province to support Operation Eagle Strike. According to a number of Sunni leaders from Ninewa with whom we met regularly, there was a serious fear within the Sunni communities that the PMF would commit the same atrocities in Ninewa that they were accused of in Anbar, Salah ad-Din, and Diyala. Many in the displaced Ninewa population believed they were simply trading one form of brutal oppression under ISIS for another under the PMF. To make things worse, there was little confidence among Sunnis that the Iraqi central government would have much control over the PMF once Ninewa was “liberated.”

Turkey also had a presence in Ninewa that was not coordinated with Baghdad or its security forces. Operating from a camp cluster inside the Kurdish lines near Zilikan, north of Mosul, Turkish special forces trained, equipped, and advised a separate mobilization force politically aligned with former Ninewa governor Atheel al-Nujaifi. This force, commonly known as the Ninewa Guards, was actively organized to support the ambiguous personal political agenda of al-Nujaifi, a point that raised concern with US policy makers as late as July 2016, well before the start of the Mosul operation. At the invitation of the KDP, the Turks had been supporting operations against ISIS with advice, arms, and fire support since 2015. But the Turks, far from being interested primarily in defeating ISIS, were intent on eliminating the presence of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in the area and ending the 20-year old campaign of PKK operations across the Iraqi-Turkish border. The Turkish presence was a significant point of contention between the Turkish and Iraqi governments at the time, and Iraq has remained unable to dislodge the Turks or stop them from operating unlawfully inside its borders since then.



Kurdish PKK guerilla at the Newroz celebration in Qandil

Since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Quds Force, the unconventional warfare arm of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, has operated inside Iraq in support of a variety of Shi’a militias, most notably Jaysh al-Mahdi, Badr, Kata’ib Hezbollah, and Asaib Ahi al-Haq. In the fight against ISIS, however, the Quds Force had a more overt presence than before, through its active support of long-standing pro-Iranian PMF affiliates (e.g., the Badr, Kata’ib Hezbollah, and Asaib Ahi al-Haq Hashd militias). These militias openly advertised their presence and affiliation during operations through social media campaigns and the display of flags and banners at their camps and on their vehicles.



Iraqi Shi’ite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani

The US-led coalition of Western military forces also directly competed with these other actors during the campaign to defeat ISIS. It is true that the US position was officially in direct support of the Iraqi government and its objectives; the coalition leadership had only an advisory role in planning and operational decisions, while the Iraqi command structure had the final say. However, the extensive intelligence assets, airstrike capability, and humanitarian-assistance funding the coalition brought to the effort gave the United States and its allies a considerable degree of influence over the progress of the campaign. For example, many Iraqi partners believed the timing of the start of the Mosul operation, in late October, was pushed forward to coincide with the US presidential election in an attempt to demonstrate the continued success of the Obama administration’s policies. Whether this assumption was accurate or not, some Iraqi partners understood that the main supplier of intelligence, firepower, and humanitarian aid had operational timelines of its own, tied to US political interests and not necessarily to the best interests of the Iraqi state.⁶



A young boy walks through the destruction after fighting between coalition forces and ISIS in Ramadi, Anbar, Iraq.

Tribal Mobilization and Competition for Influence in Ninewa Province

During the campaign to liberate the approach to Mosul along the Tigris River in the summer and fall of 2016, as described earlier, Ninewa's Sunni leaders expressed fear about how the Shi'a PMF groups that were entering Ninewa and, especially, Mosul itself, would treat the Sunni population there. Unfortunately for the Ninewa government and local militia leaders, the Iraqi PMF forces were needed to support the move to Mosul, and by October 2016 were already organized and prepared to participate in Operation Eagle Strike.

In contrast, the inability of the displaced Ninewa provincial government and the Sunni and minority tribal leaders to work together and rapidly organize a legitimate and coherent Ninewa tribal mobilization force only underscored the need for the Shi'a PMF to be included in the campaign and the importance of their collective ability to enter and influence areas in Ninewa during the campaign. The local Sunni and minority groups did not represent a coherent, coordinated bloc of Ninewa citizens; on the contrary, they actively competed with one another for the favor of the Iraqi national security forces, Ninewa provincial officials, and the US-led coalition. Furthermore, the liberation of Mosul and its outlying environs was not the sole motivation for many of these tribal and minority leaders, who saw great opportunities waiting to be seized after Iraq's forces ousted the Islamic State. As it was, their disunity led to delays in organizing, training, and deploying any local non-Shi'a militias.

The liberation of Mosul was not the sole motivation for many of these tribal and minority leaders.

Adding to the friction, the Iraqi National Security Service⁷ placed several additional requirements on Sunni tribal organizations before it would guarantee pay of approximately \$500 per fighter per month.⁸ To start with, the organizing of Sunni fighters required approval of the Ninewa governor's office because the Sunni militias supporting the Mosul offensive consisted of civilian tribal members who had been displaced during the Islamic State's rapid seizure of territory in 2014. This fact made the recruitment and approval of these tribal militias a delicate balancing act because approval hinged on support from the NSS, the Ninewa governate, and the Kurdish Democratic Party's security service. To complicate matters further, the numerous tribally-sponsored militia groups were intended to provide security to recently liberated areas that belonged to their specific tribal group, but due to political rivalries between the various decision-making parties, certain militia groups were not approved with the appropriate number of fighters to return to specific areas. Such rivalries and mobilization challenges did not help to further the larger strategic aim of the Sunni tribal mobilization effort in Ninewa, which was, beyond the mission of securing their home areas after the Iraqi Security Forces had pushed ISIS out, to signal to the displaced population of Ninewa and other areas liberated from ISIS that they would soon be able to return home and that reconciliation would follow.

For the above reasons, the Sunni tribal militias were formally organized by a political body—the Ninewa Popular Mobilization Committee. The militia groups were also required by Baghdad to be vetted by both the National Security

Iraqi Special Operation Forces (ISOF) and Iraqi Army soldiers fight Islamic State militants who occupy the last section of the Old City district in Mosul, Iraq.



Service and the Erbil province *Parastin*, the KDP's external security service.⁹ This vetting was designed to identify any fighters with ties to ISIS because all initial mobilization and training were conducted inside Kurdish-controlled territories. The Kurds believed that Sunni fighters who had family members still in ISIS-occupied territory might be coerced to conduct attacks or, worse yet, be actual ISIS sleeper agents. Therefore, fighter vetting helped maintain vital Kurdish support. Furthermore, all movements of Sunni-sponsored tribal forces, and even the Iraqi central government's security forces supporting Operation Eagle Strike, had to be coordinated with the Peshmerga. Predictably, the Kurdish political leadership

Peshmerga soldiers prepare to conduct a combined arms live-fire exercise near Erbil, Iraq. Operation Inherent Resolve.



used the coordinating process as a tool of influence to either conveniently hinder the movement of forces or stop them altogether, depending on the situation at hand and the extant political climate between the Iraqi central government and Kurdish regional authorities.

Another stipulation for the organization of Sunni tribal forces came from Iraqi national security advisor Falah Fayyad, who directed that all fighters must be trained by the US-led coalition, to improve their tactical prowess and survivability on the battlefield. Programs to train the Sunni tribal fighters were developed in 2015 and 2016, and were intended to take place between 30 and 45 days prior to deployment. This appeared to be a smart move in concept. However, the programs were predicated on the general availability of Western military trainers at the time, and by 2016, only a small number of trainers were available for the tribal militias. To complicate matters even more, most tribal fighters were mustered from the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps inside the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), and the Kurdish authorities required well-coordinated and detailed travel documents for all Arab fighters moving in the areas they controlled. This stipulation included the two tribal force training sites that were established inside

Tribal units were frequently deployed before the mandatory training was completed.

the IKR. The combination of these factors and a lack of coalition and Iraqi resources to establish more training sites in other regions meant that the actual training throughput of Sunni tribal fighters was limited. With Iraqi forces rapidly seizing terrain on the road to Mosul, tribal units were frequently deployed before the mandatory training was completed. In some cases, the deployed units lacked even sufficient ammunition, food, and other supplies.¹⁰ The onus to supply them rested on neighboring Iraqi Army units which themselves had little to share, especially with Sunni tribal forces that many Iraqi soldiers considered to be a milder form of ISIS.

In reality, Fayyad's stipulation for coalition training served as an excuse to reduce payments to the tribal forces. The limited throughput of coalition training, combined with uncertain supplies of AK-47s, insufficient ammunition per fighter, and a limited supply of Toyota Hilux trucks meant that many tribal units under the Sunni sponsorship program struggled to field even a portion of their basic allowance of fighters in organized units. These shortcomings, however, did not prevent the Iraqi leadership from sending ill-equipped, untrained, and unpaid Sunni tribal units to perform defensive security operations.

The final requirement for all fighters in the Sunni-sponsored program was that each fighter had to sign a contract stating that he would fight anywhere in Iraq as directed by the prime minister and under the command of Iraqi security forces. This contract was put in place for the Ninewa fighters because Sunni tribal units in Anbar had allegedly refused to operate outside their traditional tribal areas when operational requirements dictated that they needed to move. Whether all these stipulations were closely managed as designed is unknown. Official Iraqi bookkeeping for military payments was done manually in hard-bound accounting ledgers; it can be assumed that compliance with the prime minister's directives was also manually enforced and thus hard to verify.

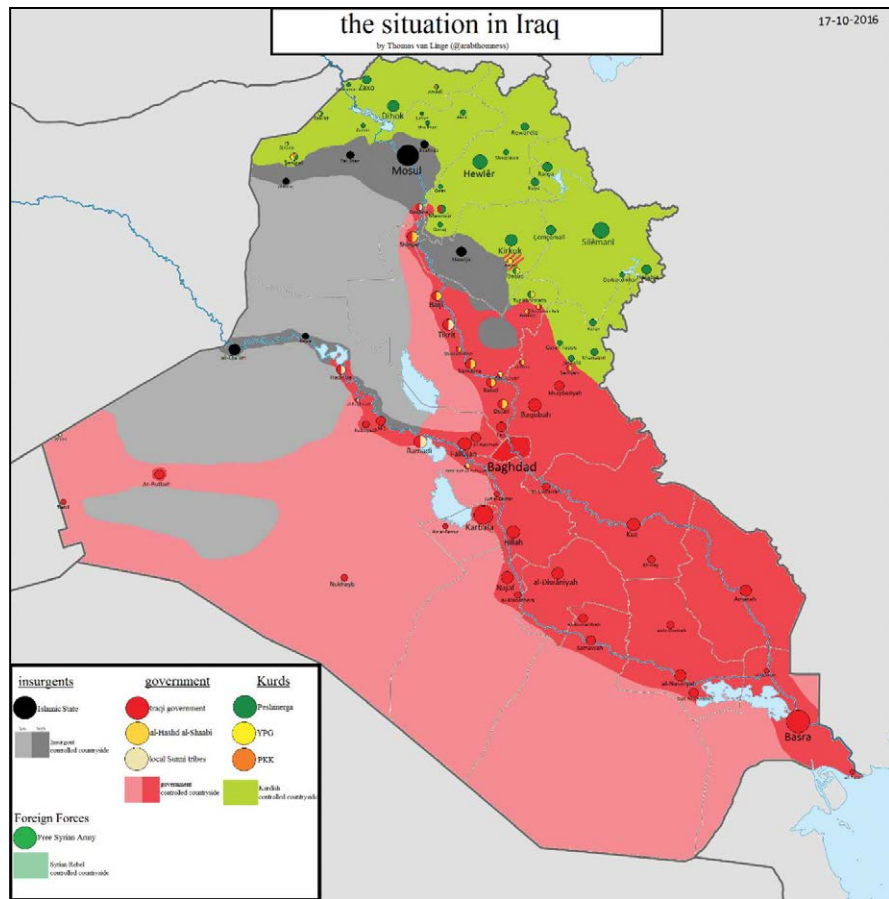
Iranian-backed militias co-opted local Sunni leaders and their fighters with quick access to the guns and vehicles the Sunnis needed.

In contrast, Iraq's National Security Service did not place these same requirements on the Shi'a PMF units that were recruiting Sunni fighters from Ninewa. According to tribal militia leaders with whom the TECC routinely worked, Iranian-backed militias, in particular Kata'ib Hezbollah, co-opted local Sunni leaders and their fighters with quick access to the guns and vehicles the Sunnis needed to secure newly liberated areas in Ninewa Province. This placed the Iranian-backed militias in direct competition with both the Iraqi security forces and the Western coalition, which was supporting the campaign in Ninewa with advice and operational enablers such as air strikes and intelligence assets. The courtship of Sunni tribes initially appeared to be a Shi'a PMF rental program that provided the Sunnis with weapons, equipment, and pay so they would work in support of ongoing PMF military operations. It now seems apparent, however, that the PMF recruitment program was intended to build long-term political influence over the majority Sunni population, including various Sunni tribal groups in Ninewa. We heard many stories from within Mosul about PMF units operating Shi'a political party offices. With many PMF formations still operating across Ninewa three years after the province's liberation from ISIS, it remains uncertain whether the initial rental program has been transformed into a "rent-to-own" policy and whether Shi'a influence in Ninewa will endure.

On the surface, the Iraqi National Security Forces, the Iranian-backed militias, and the coalition all seemed to work in concert to defeat a common enemy: ISIS. However, the interplay of the relationships between actors and the motivating interests of each actor has yet to be fully revealed. What did become clear during the Mosul operation was that while the US-led international coalition opted to achieve short-term tangible goals with the military defeat of ISIS, the Iranian-sponsored groups sought longer-term political influence within Iraq and across the greater Middle East. Some observers have coined the name "Shi'a Crescent" to characterize this notional land bridge that stretches from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea.¹¹ Although the Shi'a Crescent may prove difficult to realize on the ground, a skillfully developed series of Iranian-controlled "influence islands" across the region may be more realistic and cost-effective.¹² If this is indeed the case, the Iranians may have needed only to rent Ninewa's Sunni militias to achieve their influence in the short term. Only time will tell whether the rental policy becomes long-term ownership during this period of post-liberation political rivalry.

Reflections

The 2016–2017 campaign to liberate Mosul was a laboratory for multilateral modern warfare. My experience supporting tribal mobilization as a member of the TECC gave me a rare perspective from which to offer a few observations for further consideration. The first observation concerns how the menagerie of loosely organized coalition and Iraqi security forces viewed the operational situation at the start of the Mosul campaign in mid-October 2016. In many of the coalition and Iraqi briefings that I attended, both prior to the initiation of the campaign and thereafter, intelligence analysts assessed the situation on the ground as if ISIS were a conventional military force. It appeared to me that many of those present welcomed such a convenient analysis because it offered familiar-looking, easy-to-identify front lines, with Iraqis on one side and ISIS on the other (see map 1). North of Mosul City, these battle lines ran west to east, while to the east of the city, the lines generally followed the Tigris River in the south and the Great Zab River farther north, both of which separate Ninewa and Erbil provinces.



Map 1: Battle Lines on the Eve of the Mosul Liberation Campaign¹³

These battle lines were in stark contrast to ISIS's operations prior to 2014, when its fighters carried out lightning seizures of Anbar and Ninewa provinces and then concealed themselves among the people and kept below the horizon of visibly organized military units. In contrast, ISIS's need to occupy Ninewa province and maintain control over the population meant that its formations had to operate in the open, where they could easily be targeted from the air. They could also be accurately tracked and depicted on intelligence and operations graphics. Gone from coalition briefings (for the time being) were frustrating charts displaying ambiguous patterns of insurgent activity along important roads or in specific geographic districts. The fact that ISIS fighters were known for moving fluidly between open-ground combat and guerrilla operations, as they did during the seizures of Anbar and Ninewa, was conveniently forgotten for the time being.¹⁴

The Mosul liberation campaign, thus, was launched from a stalemate of prepared positions reminiscent of World War I (See map 2). Indeed, such prepared defenses were a sure indication that ISIS, the Kurds, and the remnants of the Iraqi Army did not have the tactical prowess to overcome the advanced technology of twenty-first century weaponry that was wielded on both sides. On one side, the US-led coalition bolstered the Kurdish line with ample air support and precision-guided munitions that struck the Islamic State's forces and pushed its tactical units into well-prepared defenses. On the other side, the Islamic State's offensive



Figure 1: Islamic State decoy "HUMVEE"¹⁵



Map 2: Composite of Mosul progress maps¹⁷

The Mosul liberation campaign was a tremendous tactical success in spite of the competing interests of all the numerous actors.

and block by block. Thus, the campaign combined the most modern precision weapons and communications available from the US-led coalition with the daily grind of brutal urban infantry combat in an ancient, brutally rubble city.

From a larger viewpoint, the Mosul liberation campaign was a tremendous tactical success in spite of the competing interests of all the numerous actors in the fray. Iraqi security forces were able to seize and hold urban terrain step by step against a well-prepared defender. From my perspective, working with a wide range of Iraqi and coalition leaders, it was clear that the Iraqi security forces were able to adjust their tactics as required to build on successes and wear down ISIS forces in and around Mosul. In one example, in December 2016, a company-size Iraqi Army strike force in east Mosul was ambushed and destroyed by ISIS fighters within a matter of minutes.¹⁸ With assistance from coalition advisors, Iraqi units learned from this disaster to make themselves less vulnerable by not clustering their vehicles together at night when they established a defensive perimeter.

The Mosul campaign was also an unlikely, but effective, combination of one country's ground forces fighting to seize and hold terrain with the support of a separate international military coalition. Whether they were members of the Counter-Terrorism Service, the Emergency Response Division, or the Iraqi Army, Iraqi troops bled for every inch of ground they seized during the Mosul offensive. But they were not alone. The coalition supported Iraqi ground forces with medical facilities, communications networking, on-the-ground advice, and most importantly, the fire support from coalition aircraft and artillery that allowed Iraqi ground forces to press forward and dislodge Islamic State defenders.¹⁹

campaign had essentially culminated with its inability to seize more territory. Although ISIS at large lacked the ability to break the stalemate on the ground, its tactical units were extremely innovative in using their dwindling resources, such as by salvaging scrap metal and fashioning armored vehicles that could be detonated remotely, for a defense-in-depth that included brief counterattacks (see figure 1). They also built and programmed commercial off-the-shelf drone aircraft to conduct reconnaissance and even drop hand grenades to harass the Kurdish and Iraqi lines.¹⁶

This situation changed, of course, as the battle pressed into the city, where ISIS's defenses took full advantage of the urban landscape. The value of precision coalition airstrikes was somewhat diminished as buildings and entire city blocks were necessarily sacrificed to degrade ISIS defenses and support the Iraqi assault forces fighting to retake the city, building by building



A view of Mosul shows the toll of the fighting on the city

It is important to keep in mind one point above all others. From the time of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 until the December 2011 withdrawal of all US forces, the US-led coalition never methodically assaulted and cleared an area the size of Mosul and its outlying districts. Such a feat would have been impossible with the available coalition manpower and given the competing missions to counter widespread resistance to US occupation and establish a US-friendly, functioning Iraqi government. From my viewpoint, the 2016–2017 Mosul liberation campaign was successful largely for one reason: it was primarily a domestic fight. Iraqis liberated Iraqis from an enemy consisting mostly of Iraqis. Regardless of the stated purpose, an invading and occupying force of perceived “medieval crusaders,” as many Iraqis regarded the coalition, could never have had the same success.

The Iraqis’ victory did not, however, change the fact that the various actors involved in Operation Eagle Strike had differing objectives and operated independently to varying degrees. Some, including the Kurds to the north, the Turkish army, and Iran and its militia proxies, had longer-term views of how to shape Iraq and the region. The US-led coalition had only the military defeat of the Islamic State as its focus. Perhaps this is understandable, considering the heavy costs the coalition bore to deploy and deliver the devastating air strikes that did so much to aid Iraqi ground forces. More pragmatically, a measurable military objective such as the taking of a city is generally achievable, as was apparent from the ground seized during Operation Eagle Strike’s rapid advance toward the city in the fall of 2016. Broader objectives become less measurable when an opponent as flexible as the Islamic State knows how to reduce its military signature and return to a guerrilla-style insurgency of the kind we currently see in Iraq and Syria.

The very name of the ground operation to liberate Mosul, Eagle Strike, further illustrates the United States’ singular focus on eliminating ISIS. Despite the fact that Iraqis were expected to do the vast majority of the bleeding and dying in

the carnage that was the liberation of Mosul, the operation was named for the US Army's 101st Infantry Division, the "Screaming Eagles," and its 2nd "Strike" Brigade. The 101st Division headquarters served as the Coalition Joint Land Force Component Command in charge of coordinating coalition support for the Iraqi ground assault, while the Strike brigade provided the command-and-control structure for the coalition's advise-and-assist effort. While cooperation and coordination may have been the watchwords of the coalition effort, such a name betrays an obvious assumption of US primacy—notable for a nation that was merely assisting, not executing, the Iraqi campaign.

Coalition leaders were not able to grasp how competing actors leveraged coalition firepower to further their longer-term agendas.

Even with a near-continuous air-strike capability and the on-the-ground advising component, which provided a multitude of options to shape the campaign, the coalition remained focused on achievable short-term military objectives. Coalition leaders were not able to account for the differing motivations of various actors involved in the campaign, or grasp how competing actors leveraged coalition firepower to further their longer-term agendas. In particular, the Iranian-backed Shi'a militias, which had the flexibility and reach to go into remote parts of western Ninewa where the Iraqi Army could not go, seized territory and maintained a presence in areas where coalition air strikes had left the Islamic State unable to govern in the open. PMF units were quick and eager to take advantage of the steady stream of coalition air strikes as fire support to help facilitate their "liberation" and subsequent occupation of many of the remote areas south and west of Mosul City. Once the territory was occupied, Iran and its proxies moved in to establish order and set up their own governance services.

Hashad Al-Sha'abi (commonly called PMF) forces celebrate after defeating ISIS



In effect, these PMF operations gave weight to the ISIS narrative that Iranian-backed Shi'a groups oppressed and preyed on Sunni populations in Iraq's Sunni heartland, where the Iraqi central government had little writ. Thus, in 2019 we saw ISIS cells persistently willing to resist the Iraqi central government and the various Shi'a militias from the south that still occupy Mosul and greater Ninewa.²⁰ Ironically, the 2017 military defeat of the Islamic State across Iraq set the conditions for the extremist group to reassert itself by reinforcing the narrative of continued Sunni disenfranchisement. The inability of the United States and its coalition partners to recognize the major competing interests in Ninewa and avoid abetting them could mean that one divisive occupying force merely supplanted another.

As governmental, informational, and military power continue to diffuse in northern Iraq, and numerous actors are able to operate and compete for their own desired outcomes, we should expect to have difficulty linking actions to end states. Some may take their cues from the PMF strategy and skillfully leverage the operational effects of other actors with more resources, essentially piggybacking on others' efforts and gaining advantage on the cheap in the process.

As of this writing, Ninewa is again a contested province in which ISIS cells continue to be active. Shi'a PMF units from the Iraqi south and their Iranian-backed counterparts remain in control of the city of Mosul. They have established political offices to influence younger Sunnis, who may be tempted by the relative prosperity of the Shi'a populations in southern and central Iraq to side with Shi'a political parties and their militias.²¹ Only time will tell whether the coalition's short-term tactical focus, coupled with the extraordinary tactical efforts of the Iraqi Army and CTS elements, will lead to a stable Ninewa province governed by Iraqis, or whether all the effort will have been for naught.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Rice is a retired US military officer.

Copyright 2020, Ian Rice. The US federal government is granted for itself and others acting on its behalf in perpetuity a paid-up, nonexclusive, irrevocable worldwide license in this work to reproduce, prepare derivative works, distribute copies to the public, and perform publicly and display publicly, by or on behalf of the US federal government. All other rights are reserved by the copyright owner(s). Foreign copyrights may apply.

NOTES

- 1 Department of the Army, *Special Operations*, ADRP 3-05 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2012), 1–13. For a non-American perspective on this problem, see Pierre Dehaene, "The Localization Strategy: Strategic Sense for Special Operations Forces in Niger," *Combating Terrorism Exchange* 9, no. 1 (February 2019): <http://liferayce3.globalecco.org/web/guest/ctx-vol-9-no-1-february-2019>
- 2 The misuse of special operations forces is not unique to ISOF. Two notable examples from US history include, first, the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion's conduct of a brutal month-long patrol across Guadalcanal. See David Sears, "The 2nd Marine Raiders' Legendary March Across Guadalcanal," *Marine Times* (8 February 2018): <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/off-duty/military-culture/2018/02/08/the-2nd-marine-raiders-legendary-march-across-guadalcanal>. The second took place in 1944, when the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were completely destroyed at Cisterna, Italy, near the Anzio landing site. In this case, a specially organized assault infantry unit with light weapons was no match for armored German units in a prepared defense. Only six of the initial 767 Rangers returned; two specialized assault units were complete combat losses, and the Mediterranean theater was left with no equivalent capability to support further operations. See Michael J. King, *Leavenworth Papers 11: Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), 29–41.
- 3 Peshmerga forces in the current Iraqi Kurdistan region are generally divided into three categories. The 70s series groups are those affiliated with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; the 80s series groups are aligned with the Kurdish Democratic Party; the 90s series are the combined elements operating directly for the Ministry of Peshmerga.
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- 5 Ibid.
- 6 This is not a unique case. In 1968, as a presidential candidate with no official US government position, Richard Nixon sabotaged the peace talks in Vietnam to gain an advantage at the polls. This tactic helped him to win the US presidency and prolonged the carnage in Vietnam by several years. See John A. Farrell, "When a Candidate Conspired with a Foreign Power to Win An Election," *Politico*, 6 August 2017: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/08/06/nixon-vietnam-candidate-conspired-with-foreign-power-win-election-215461>. In another instance, Senator Edward Kennedy placed his political party over national policy and attempted to sabotage disarmament talks between the Reagan Administration and the Soviet Union. His goal was to set conditions for a Democratic presidential victory in 1984 that would bring policy changes favorable for the Soviets. See Peter Robinson, "Ted Kennedy's Soviet Gambit," *Forbes*, 27 August 2009: <https://www.forbes.com/2009/08/27/ted-kennedy-soviet-union-ronald-reagan-opinions-columnists-peter-robinson.html#5c15d734359a>

- 7 Iraq's National Security Service is the arm of the national security mechanism that was responsible for the vetting, organization, and payroll for all tribal mobilization forces. During my 2016-2017 tour, I heard rumors that the NSS sponsored and directed internal security operations against enemies of the Iraqi state. Recent studies that discuss the NSS include Erica Gaston and András Derzsi-Horváth, "Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control," Global Public Policy Institute (21 March 2018): https://www.gppi.net/media/Gaston_Derzsi-Horvath_Iraq_After_ISIL.pdf; and Julie Ahn, Maeve Campbell, and Pete Knoetgen, "The Politics of Security in Ninewa: Preventing an ISIS Resurgence in Northern Iraq," Harvard Kennedy School (7 May 2018). Iraq's National Security Service also has its own Facebook page.
- 8 Based on my experience working with the TMF, the \$500 per month per fighter was used to pay for food, water, and a monthly "finder's fee," which went to the managing tribal force leaders. This logistics system left little in the pocket of the tribal fighter.
- 9 Erbil Province's Parastin chief, Major General Naji Ahmead, sat on the Kurdistan Regional Security Council (KRSC) under KRSC Chancellor Masrour Barzani.
- 10 Gaston and Horváth. "Iraq After ISIL," 25.
- 11 "America's Strategy for Countering Iran Makes No Sense," *The Economist* (16 September 2017): <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/09/16/americas-strategy-for-countering-iran-makes-no-sense>
- 12 KRSC Chancellor Masrour Barzani first mentioned this concept to the author during a September 2016 meeting in Erbil, Iraq.
- 13 Thomas van Linge, "The Situation in Iraq:" http://www.mediafire.com/convkey/d172/f4at984q4adshcqzg.jpg?size_id=d. This map is from the University of Texas's Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. The library website links to source material.
- 14 Craig Whiteside, "New Masters of Revolutionary Warfare: The Islamic State Movement (2002–2016)," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 4 (August 2016): 16.
- 15 Author photo.
- 16 United States Army Combined Arms Command, *Mosul Study Group: What the Battle for Mosul Teaches the Force*, No. 17-24U (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2017), 26–27, 44–46: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Primer-on-Urban-Operation/Documents/Mosul-Public-Release1.pdf>
- 17 These maps come from the University of Texas's Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection: <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/iraq.html>. The library website links to source material.
Top left: Ninewah Media Centre: <https://twitter.com/NinevehMC/status/820676379507310592> ;
top right: Ninewah Media Centre: <https://twitter.com/NinevehMC/status/823209282221076482> ;
bottom left: Ninewah Media Centre: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DACdjwdXoAYjEVQ.jpg:large> ;
bottom right: Ninewah Media Centre: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DDQkPo1XYAIcH4o.jpg:large>
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- 21 Isadora Gotts, "PMU Economic Offices Undermine Fragile Stability in Mosul," *Al-Monitor*, 27 May 2019: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/05/iraq-economy-mosul-pmu.html>

The CTX Interview

Kåre Jakobsen, Commander of the Danish Jaegercorps

Interviewed by Dr. Troels Burchall Henningsen, Royal Danish Defence College



ON 7 MAY 2019, LIEUTENANT COLONEL KÅRE JAKOBSEN, COMMANDER of the Danish Jaegercorps, spoke with Dr. Troels Henningsen about the Danish Jaegercorps' military assistance (MA) mission to train the Ali al-Furat Brigade, a militia supported by more than 30 Sunni tribes in Iraq's Anbar Province.¹ Apart from describing the sometimes innovative methods applied by the Danish force to their mission, the interview touches on the intricacies of training, advising, and assisting a militia that represents a disadvantaged minority in a sectarian state and society. LTC Jakobsen also reflects on the demands that junior coalition partners face when they join a larger US-led SOF coalition.

TROELS HENNINGSEN: Please begin by briefly describing the Danish Jaegercorps to those members of the international SOF community who are not familiar with it.

LTC KÅRE JAKOBSEN: The Danish Jaegercorps is a special operations force founded in 1785 and re-established in 1961 as a long-range reconnaissance patrol unit. During the Cold War, the Danish army trained for long-range reconnaissance patrols in East Germany and even within the Soviet Union. After the end of the Cold War, the Jaegercorps developed into a full-fledged special operations force able to conduct direct action, special reconnaissance, and military assistance. In other words, we are a multi-tool. While our training emphasizes direct action and special reconnaissance, on international missions the Jaegercorps has primarily conducted military assistance. Our operators are comfortable working as instructors due to their training as NCOs or officers, as well as their experience providing training, such as parachuting and long-range patrols, for other parts of the Danish Defence forces. Organizationally, we are a rather small unit divided

Colonel Hami Moussa al-Karbouly and the Ali al-Furat Brigade, militia supported by more than 30 Sunni tribes in Iraq's Anbar Province.

into three squadrons plus combat support and combat service support functions. Our small size, combined with both national and international responsibilities at all levels of the conflict spectrum, requires us to be a generalist SOF unit, unlike some US SOF units that specialize in one of the primary SOF tasks.

HENNINGSSEN: Leading up to the deployment of the Jaegercorps in Operation Inherent Resolve, Danish politicians debated the legal and political framework for the deployment. Tell us a bit about the political and juridical mandate you received before the mission.

JAKOBSEN: We were given a very broad mandate that allowed us to operate in both Syria and Iraq, where we contributed to the degradation and destruction of the Islamic State. The Danish parliament also continued its tradition of deploying Danish SOF without any national caveats.² I think this was made possible because Danish conventional forces were already participating in Operation Inherent Resolve, and the government and a large majority of the Danish parliament agreed that Denmark should remain a steadfast member of the coalition. The broad mandate gave us the freedom to choose the approach we believed would make the most effective contribution to the operation and which suited our capabilities. We made this decision in cooperation with USCENTCOM and the Iraqi government.



Danish Jaegercorps

HENNINGSSEN: The only contentious aspect, as I understand it, was how to handle detainees, a question which had previously caused controversy in Denmark. Is this right?

JAKOBSEN: Yes, Danish politicians pay close attention to international humanitarian law (*jus in bello*) and the rules of engagement, and so does the Jaegercorps, in both our training and our deployments. The debate centered on whether the Jaegercorps could risk detaining people and, if yes, how we should handle them. Much of the debate settled down once it became clear that we would likely support the Iraqi security forces, which would carry out the actual detentions and handle the detainees themselves. Our expected role was to accompany the

Iraqis but remain in the background and “assist, advise, and enable.” Even so, we built a detainment facility at the al-Asad Airbase, and established a procedure for how to handle detainees and how to consult with juridical experts in Denmark when necessary.

HENNINGSSEN: You eventually settled on the mission to train, advise, and assist the Ali al-Furat Brigade. How did you go about choosing this specific mission?

JAKOBSEN: We had not received a request from USCENTCOM or the Iraqi government to adopt a specific task or mission, so we decided to send a pre-deployment site survey team to Iraq. We considered our primary mission to be in support of the Iraqi government’s efforts to build security forces to fight ISIS. Therefore, our team’s job was to find a suitable unit to work with, but the team arrived in the spring of 2016, when the campaign against ISIS was already well underway.

After consulting with Operation Inherent Resolve’s Special Forces headquarters, we chose another approach. We would train a unit in an area that was not yet part of the fight, which would enable us to build that unit from the ground up. At the time of our arrival in November 2016, the western part of Anbar Province represented the next stage of the campaign, so, in coordination with CJSOTF-I (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Iraq), we chose a unit from that area. Our political mandate was broad enough to allow us to work with tribal units that had been vetted both according to US procedures and by the Danish Ministry of Defence. Other SOF members of the coalition with whom we consulted pointed us to the Ali al-Furat Brigade. We went out to meet Colonel

We considered our primary mission to be in support of the Iraqi government’s efforts to build security forces to fight ISIS.

Danish soldiers teach Iraqi soldiers weapons safety in a basic weapons skills course at the Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.





A fishing boat crosses the Euphrates River in al-Qaem city in the western Iraqi province of Anbar.

Hami Moussa al-Karbouly, the commander of the unit, at an Iraqi training facility to learn what he wanted to achieve from partnering with us. We also learned that the Iraqi government included the unit as part of the popular mobilization forces, which is important when working with a tribal unit, and that US SOF units had worked with COL Moussa before and vouched for him.

We chose to use al-Asad Airbase for the training. It was a good departure point for Moussa, who wanted to head north-west along the Euphrates River basin to liberate the areas from which the various Sunni tribes that comprised the Ali al-Furat Brigade originated. After consulting with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Air Force base commanders, we made part of the airbase our training area.

HENNINGSEN: Although COL Moussa had previously served in the security forces, the Ali al-Furat Brigade was an unusual unit to train, being made up of so many tribes, and not being part of the official Iraqi security forces but rather of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). You had a few interpreters with Iraqi backgrounds, but how else did you overcome the potential cultural barriers between your unit and the members of the brigade?

We did something which I think is very common among Danish units, which was to position ourselves on an equal footing with the brigade members.

JAKOBSEN: We did something which I think is very common among Danish units, which was to position ourselves on an equal footing with the brigade members, talking eye-to-eye and not as superior to subordinate. We tried to establish an environment of camaraderie, with room for banter and joking. We were not better than them; we were just better educated militarily. They were the ones who had volunteered to fight ISIS, which was something we had immense respect for. We therefore treated them with the respect they deserved.

HENNINGSEN: It sounds like you put concerns about cultural background to the side and focused on the military aspect of the training.

JAKOBSEN: We knew from previous deployments to the Middle East that we would face some cultural differences. When concerns came up this time, such as whether to continue training during Ramadan, we went to COL Moussa. In that particular case, on his advice, we settled on a solution that reduced the daily training from seven hours to four hours, because the brigade still wanted to move forward and continue with the training. Of course, we had time off on Fridays, but we trained Saturdays and Sundays. We were guests. It was their culture, their way of doing things, that prevailed. They were also very pragmatic with regard to cultural and religious issues, so we found ways of dealing with time for prayers, fasting, and various celebrations. Still, our primary way to overcome the potential cultural barrier was through the personal respect and even friendship that emerged between our instructors and militia members.

HENNINGSEN: I imagine you could also use those bonds to gain information about the area of operation.



Iraqi pro-government forces advance towards the town of Rawa, on the Euphrates river, during their offensive against the Islamic State.

JAKOBSEN: Precisely. Over time, the Iraqis' trust in us increased and they told us how they had been forced to leave their homes but still had family living there. Therefore, they had good intelligence networks that included persons who were still in areas now controlled by ISIS. In these areas, the situation was messy. Some people had not been able to flee in time; others were fighting for ISIS out of fear that if they did not, their family would be killed or otherwise punished. And some had converted to ISIS. So having access to fine-grained intelligence was hugely important. Of course, we were aware of the danger that the informal contacts might affect operational security. They might tell their family, for instance, that the Ali al-Furat Brigade was coming. But we and the leadership of the Ali al-Furat Brigade kept the time and date of the military operations secret for as long as possible.

HENNINGSSEN: When conducting MA, we typically talk about the need to establish trust over a long period of time. From this perspective, rotating personnel can be counterproductive. Did rotating personnel hurt the process of trust-building in your case?

JAKOBSEN: No, not to the extent that it had an impact. The reason may be that, from the beginning of our training program, we were very honest with COL Moussa and told him that we had to rotate our soldiers and instructors, but that we would coordinate the rotations with the training to minimize disruptions. We also assured him that our soldiers and instructors would be coming back on future rotations, so he would see familiar faces.

There were four other things we did to reduce the impact of rotating personnel. First, the incoming and outgoing instructor teams overlapped by a few weeks, which gave the current instructors time to introduce the new instructors to how we applied our training program to the Ali al-Furat Brigade and how they should interact with the brigade members. Second, the brigade was trained one company at a time, and each company had a training cycle of about four weeks in the beginning of

the buildup phase. In this way, each Danish rotation trained two Iraqi companies and then rotated out at the same time that the second Iraqi company finished its training.³ This also enabled our personnel to have rather short deployments, which is important to a small unit like the Jaegercorps. Third, when the fighting started in Anbar Province, the Ali al-Furat Brigade deployed primarily in company-sized units, and each of the companies knew some of the Jaegercorps instructors who had trained them and redeployed. This meant that, to a large extent, the same people who trained them went to battle with them. Finally, Moussa's command group was constant, so all of us knew them and the companies they had trained.

HENNINGSEN: Returning to the unconventional makeup of the Ali al-Furat Brigade, tell us about your first meetings with the leadership and the early choices you made.

COL Moussa did not want the unit to be a guard force, but rather a mobile offensive unit.

JAKOBSEN: Initially, we spent time trying to understand their needs and ambitions and how they should operate in conjunction with the Iraqi Army. Luckily, COL Moussa's military background meant that he knew about military training and had a vision concerning the kind of training he wanted for his unit. More specifically, he did not want the unit to be a guard force, but rather a mobile offensive unit capable of liberating the area from which the tribal members originated. At that time, the brigade did not even have any vehicles, only the will to join the fight. Together we identified the equipment, vehicles, and training they needed, which included medical care, urban combat, counter-IED, and desert warfare. We devised a training program based on these criteria. We also had to decide on the maximum number of Iraqi tribesmen to train at the same time. We settled on company-size units as the best compromise that would provide enough manpower for the fight and still be small enough for the Iraqi tribesmen



Anbar Province

to maintain command and control, given the amount of training we could do within the available time. The program began by training individual skills and then went on to group, platoon, and company training. Knowing the exact tasks the units would conduct allowed us to drop some large unneeded training sections that would have been included in a conventional training program.

As in the US Army Special Forces, our NCOs and officers have a background in the conventional army, which we relied on when designing some parts of the training program. Other parts drew more on our SOF background, because the Ali al-Furat Brigade would operate independently and make use of surprise and ambushes. Also, the unit was non-conventional by Western standards, because it consisted of people who were, for the most part, starting more or less from scratch. It did include some former military personnel, but also farmers, teachers, hairdressers, and skilled and unskilled workers. The subsequent deployment was also not entirely conventional, because it would

include both covert operations and conventional operations. Furthermore, the companies would be sent into the desert on their own to find and defeat ISIS networks, with only personnel and units from the Jaegercorps to accompany and enable them. This was not the conventional way for Danish forces to complete that kind of training.

What stood out to us was the high degree of discipline within the Ali al-Furat Brigade, compared to units we have trained in Africa or Afghanistan, despite the fact that the brigade consisted of civilians from a multitude of Sunni tribes. COL Moussa understood how to be a good leader whom people respected and followed, but he was also a tough leader who maintained discipline. When the Iraqi tribesmen were to initiate training in the morning, they would arrive in full gear 30 to 45 minutes before the agreed time, and until we arrived at five to ten minutes before the agreed time, they would stand there waiting, seemingly nervous that we would not show. We had never seen that before. In other tribal units, discipline suffers when the

Liaison officer in Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR)



leader is not present. But when Moussa was not around, he had someone from his command group ready to step in and maintain order.

HENNINGSEN: COL Moussa seems to be such an integral part of the performance of the Ali al-Furat Brigade. Describe him for us, both as a military commander and as a prominent leader among the Sunni tribes.

The soldiers were seen as representatives of their people, who considered it a failure if a soldier of theirs did not do well.

JAKOBSEN: He is a strong leader in both an informal and a formal sense. On the formal side, he was the front man who dispensed salaries and handed out weapons, and he was the person we consulted on matters concerning the building of the Ali al-Furat brigade units. Structural and organizational matters would be discussed, approved, and distributed to the Ali al-Furat Brigade by him, not by us. He also participated in the daily training of the Iraqi tribesmen and verbally supported and supplemented our instructions and back briefs to the tribesmen when needed. On the informal side, Moussa was also a natural leader; his father had been a high-ranking tribal sheik before he was killed by ISIS. His uncle had suffered the same fate, so Moussa was now the head of this specific Sunni tribe and had strong ties to the sheiks of the other Sunni tribes. His legitimacy and popularity meant that the Sunni tribes supported the creation of the Ali al-Furat Brigade and sent men to join it. The soldiers were seen as representatives of their people, who considered it a failure if a soldier of theirs did not do well and would immediately send a replacement if called upon to do so by Moussa.

We made a deliberate choice to strengthen COL Moussa's position with the brigade members. He was the one commanding them and the one they were to seek advice from. We did not go behind Moussa's back; we went to him. For instance, instead of telling everyone when we were getting new weapons, we would tell Moussa and he would forward the message to the militiamen. We made sure to empower him and make him the front figure, not least because his personal authority was critical for maintaining connections to the other Sunni sheiks. The first Ali al-Furat Brigade was composed of men from 27 tribes, and I believe that at one point some 30 Sunni tribes were represented.

HENNINGSEN: How did you manage the question of equipment? Providing equipment to tribal militias can create a dilemma. On the one hand, externally supported equipment might not be properly maintained or taken care of. On the other hand, without new equipment, the unit might not be able to take advantage of the training they received.

JAKOBSEN: The fact that the weapons, vehicles, and ammunition were provided by the coalition determined much of our approach to the equipment problem. Everything was supplied from the coalition's Iraqi Training and Equipment fund. It took us a while to get our heads around the coalition's procedures and be recognized in the logistical column. From time to time we were short of equipment for the Ali al-Furat Brigade units, which forced us to adapt the training. Denmark, as a member of the coalition, contributed to the equipment fund but did not supply special equipment, weapons, ammunition, or vehicles for our partner units. If Denmark had provided specific equipment for the Ali al-Furat Brigade, that would probably have created logistical issues with regard to reserve parts, types of ammunition, and so on.

Of course, the ideal situation for long-term sustainment would have been for the Iraqi Army to provide the equipment, but they were not capable of doing that and the Sunni tribes themselves lacked sufficient resources to buy their own equipment. They did find or raise some money once in a while that allowed them to buy supplemental equipment and weapons on their own, but only in very small numbers; they did not receive any separate funding from the Iraqi government, the Sunni tribes, or the coalition for this.

HENNINGSEN: Once you received the equipment, you chose an innovative way to handle it.

JAKOBSEN: Yes. Loss of equipment was a major problem in Iraq, both on and off the battlefield. A large portion of all equipment ended on the black market, and the coalition had to re-equip many Iraqi units during the fight against the Islamic State. The concept we developed to avoid equipment losses had two aspects. First, we made clear that all equipment belonged to the Ali al-Furat Brigade, not to the individual soldiers. Second, every new batch of equipment came with a shipping container in which the equipment was locked up at night, under the control of COL Moussa. Once we received vehicles, we also parked them inside our tightly guarded facilities. The companies shared the weapons, which meant that only the company that was undergoing training at the time could have access to them. Once we received sufficient equipment, it was assigned to specific soldiers, but everything was still locked up in the container at night and on days off.

This model for keeping track of the equipment was recognized as valuable by the coalition and especially within the logistical structure, but I am unsure whether the concept was disseminated to other units in Iraq.

HENNINGSEN: Who came up with the idea to tightly control the equipment?

JAKOBSEN: The concept was developed after we arrived in Iraq, not due to any legal or financial concerns from Denmark. Moreover, we had to find a solution for the lack of equipment in the early months of the training. COL Moussa knew that equipment loss was a potential problem and recognized the need for tight control over what we had. Another reason for adopting this system was that well-connected members of the Iraqi security force could order Moussa to hand over his brigade's equipment to them. They could not get to it, however, if it was controlled by the coalition or kept in shipping containers belonging to the coalition. Part of the idea was that, even

though Moussa had the key to unlock the containers, he could point to them and say: "See, there is a lock. It is the coalition's people who unlock it every morning and hand out weapons." Thus, he had a kind of plausible deniability for any Iraqi security forces that wanted the Ali al-Furat Brigade's weapons. Luckily, it was never an issue.

HENNINGSEN: How well did the new way of controlling the equipment work?

JAKOBSEN: Because of it, the Ali al-Furat Brigade did not lose a single piece of issued equipment during their training and buildup period, which is quite remarkable even compared to some Western units.

The Ali al-Furat Brigade did not lose a single piece of issued equipment during their training and buildup period, which is quite remarkable.

HENNINGSEN: Another remarkable aspect of the Ali al-Furat Brigade concerns the issue of salaries and funding. How was the brigade supposed to be financed and how did it work out?

JAKOBSEN: The Iraqi government had promised to provide funds for the 2,000 men whom Moussa had recruited for the Ali al-Furat Brigade. As it turned out, however, payment rarely came when it was supposed to or in the promised amounts. Luckily, Moussa also knew one of the local parliament members in al-Qa'im through his tribal connections, and that person tried to put pressure on the government to make the payments as promised. From our perspective, it seemed apparent that the Shi'a militias were heavily favored, whereas the Sunni militias in Anbar Province received fewer resources.

HENNINGSEN: So payment depended upon sectarian and personal connections?

JAKOBSEN: That is the impression we were given, and the understanding we got from speaking to the different Iraqi military leaders and coalition units that were working with tribal forces. Some of the problems probably also have to do with party politics. As it turned out, the militia men were never paid during the training. Yet they still came, which really showed personal motivation, because these people lived far away from their families or were living with family members in refugee camps. They came of their own accord, even though they had to pay for the trip themselves. In this desperate situation, Moussa and his family used much

of their personal money to pay some of the men's travel expenses. Each of them knew that they had to go to battle and risk dying, and they were not being paid to be there and did not know if they would be paid afterwards.

Each of them knew that they had to go to battle and risk dying, and they were not being paid to be there.

When the unit did receive a small sum from Baghdad, Moussa decided to distribute the money to those who had been working. The Iraqi military had promised to pay for food, drink, and fuel and, of course, accommodation and training facilities, but these things did not come in the amounts needed, either. In the end, we and the coalition requested that Denmark be allowed to support the brigade with a small amount of money for buying supplementary food and fuel, and to undertake emergency repairs in the camp, and permission was granted. In general, the coalition leadership was aware of the issue of payment arrears. The coalition, along with the American Embassy in Baghdad, often brought up the problem with the Iraqi government. So, at the senior level, we received much-needed support from the Americans and the coalition headquarters.

HENNINGSEN: The Iraqi government also tied the question of payment to operational activity, which leads us to the question of how the Ali al-Furat Brigade was deployed.

JAKOBSEN: The first Iraqi request for deployment of the Ali al-Furat Brigade was really challenging for us. As mentioned, we wanted the unit to be mobile and offensive. But the task the government gave us was to take control of and secure a recently liberated area. Moussa and I spent an entire afternoon discussing the pros and cons. In the end, we agreed to do it to earn a reputation. Moussa would deploy a company and thereby gain access to funding from Baghdad. As it turned out, the unit did really well because they were highly disciplined and, very slowly, we started to receive small allowances. But the important part was that the Ali al-Furat Brigade began to be mentioned as a part of the Iraqi security structure, which allowed Moussa to participate in the commanders' meetings. After this assignment, we explained to the Iraqi army commander that the intention was for the Ali al-Furat Brigade to deploy as an offensive and mobile force.

The brigade knew the terrain in Anbar province, knew the surroundings and structure of the city of al-Qa'im, and knew the human and physical networks, all of which were important to protect the city from destruction. Therefore, it was important to the tribal members that it was the Ali al-Furat Brigade specifically that participated in liberating al-Qa'im and the surrounding area.

HENNINGSEN: In the end, what do you think determined the decision to give the Ali al-Furat Brigade the offensive role it wanted?

JAKOBSEN: I believe it was the brigade's local relations and especially Moussa's disciplined manner toward the divisional commanders in the Iraqi Army that won their trust. He fulfilled every assignment without going outside the mandate. Once the attack on al-Qa'im commenced, the division commander gave the Ali al-Furat Brigade an important offensive role, because they had gained his trust and he believed in them. I believe the decision was entirely made by the Iraqi division commander; it was not a directive from Baghdad. Moussa had been in the military system long enough to know that his superiors had to be able to trust the unit. The Ali al-Furat Brigade did not behave like other tribal units, which would usually just continue with the operation after their mission had been completed.



Members from coalition meet to discuss future operations at Al-Asad Airbase

HENNINGSEN: The many Shi'a militias that operated under the umbrella of the PMF (Popular Mobilization Forces) in support of Operation Inherent Resolve posed a particularly thorny challenge to the coalition. Once operations in Anbar Province began, the Ali al-Furat Brigade

had to deal with Shi'a PMF militias, and even cooperate with them, while fearing what they might do if they took control of al-Qa'im, the city from which much of the brigade was recruited and which it wanted to liberate. Did you confer with or advise COL Moussa on this issue?

JAKOBSEN: Not to a large extent. We supported him by showing that we were right there beside him. Moussa always had the backing of the coalition. We got him into the right meetings together with the Iraqi division and brigade commanders, for instance. His brigade operated by permission of the Iraqi military and therefore he tried to maintain a good dialogue with them. After all, it was the government and the military who had ordered the Shi'a PMFs into Anbar, and Moussa had to accept that. Due to his position in the province, Moussa also knew many PMF personnel and he knew that after we had redeployed our unit back to Denmark, he would still have to be able to work with them. They were Iraqis, too, and in the long run, no matter whether they are Sunnis or Shi'as, Iraqis have to be able to stand together. Our task was simply to support COL Moussa to increase his standing vis-à-vis the Iraqi Army. Together, he and the military leaders had to handle the Shi'a PMFs that came in to participate in the offensive operations.

There is little doubt that Moussa would have preferred his alliance of Sunni tribes, or at least the Iraqi army, to be involved in liberating the area along the Euphrates River valley and al-Qa'im. As you mentioned, the Sunni tribesmen might also have been a bit worried about what

the Shi'a PMFs might do in the area, but Moussa chose to accept the authority of the Iraqi Army and its deployment of the Shi'a PMF units. Without having asked him directly about it, I am sure he had to go along with a lot of things that he did not necessarily agree with. That is just how it is when the rules are defined by a Shi'a majority.

The main point was to avoid creating anything resembling a skills assembly line, because that kind of training would not work on the battlefield.

HENNINGSEN: When you look back at the Jaegercorps' mission in Iraq, what do you think was the key to its successful outcome?

JAKOBSEN: It is hard to say. Many of the Iraqi tribesmen came from the street, so obviously individual skills training was important, as was training that allowed them to fight in groups, squads, and companies. But ultimately, the main point was to avoid creating anything resembling a skills assembly line, because that kind of training would not work on the battlefield. Instead, we took these ideas one step further during the last part of the training by including exercises to "train the trainer," i.e., the Iraqi instructors. Exercise scenarios included engaging the opposition, communication breakdowns, IED simulations, and preparation to fight, not just on their own but alongside the Iraqi military.

A live-fire exercise on Al Asad Airbase.



They need to conduct their part of the offensive plan, whether it is on the flanks or at the rear or up front. They need to fight alongside other units, which is important. Once the offensive commenced, accompanying, advising, and assisting obviously became the most important aspect of our work. Luckily, we were able to divide our effort and assign priority to whatever was most important in the different phases of training and operations.

HENNINGSEN: It sounds like the broad political mandate from the Danish parliament gave you the freedom to carry out the advise-and-assist part of the mission in the way you preferred.

JAKOBSEN: Yes, and we knew that advise-assist-and-accompany was a big part of the potential success of the Ali al-Furat Brigade. Right from the beginning, we could tell the militia men that we would be by their side from the first training session to the end of the offensive operations. They heard us say it during training, but when they saw it happen during the operations, it really made a difference to them: that pledge was not just something we said in a training environment. They really believed that we were going to be there, and we showed them when it was needed that we had their back. I think it is a very basic bond: when you have fought alongside each other, then you are connected for life. If possible, I would prefer to include the advise-assist-and-accompany part of military assistance in future operations. To be where battles are won really motivates our units' operators and makes them more eager to do more military assistance missions.

HENNINGSEN: Are you aware of what happened to the Ali al-Furat Brigade after ISIS had been conventionally defeated?

The local knowledge, connections, and discipline of the Ali al-Furat Brigade mean that the Iraqi military sees great use for it.

JAKOBSEN: Yes, we are still in contact with COL Moussa, who has remained in al-Qa'im. He continues to be in charge of the Ali al-Furat Brigade, which now works as a security force, manning checkpoints and doing security patrolling. It does not serve as a border guard (al-Qa'im is strategically placed at an important border crossing into Syria). In addition to guard duties, they also carry out operations with the Iraqi military. The local knowledge, connections, and discipline of the Ali al-Furat Brigade mean that the Iraqi military sees great use for the unit and brings it along when operating in the local area. In that way, the brigade is very well liked. I know that Moussa has a good relationship with the mayor in al-Qa'im and with the division commander and brigade commander in the area. So, in that way, the Ali al-Furat Brigade is more or less consolidated and integrated into the Iraqi security structure.

HENNINGSEN: From the beginning, the Ali al-Furat Brigade had the approval of the Iraqi government, but payment was an issue. Are they still not being paid enough?

JAKOBSEN: Yes, that is correct. I do not want to be too critical of the Iraqi government, and I do not have firsthand knowledge of any internal discussions that have taken place between the different ministries or how the Iraqi government has been forced to prioritize its finances. As it is, some of the brigade's men are being paid, but not all of them. COL Moussa's solution is to continue to distribute whatever money he does receive only among those who are on active duty.

HENNINGSSEN: What did the Jaegercorps learn from the experience with the Ali al-Furat Brigade?

JAKOBSEN: As a unit we learned, or rather re-learned, what it is like to work with the Iraqis. We learned how to work with a tribal unit, which, unlike a SOF or conventional unit, had to be built from the ground up with absolutely no pre-requisites. We also learned how much you can lift people who are motivated. In the evenings, after the training, we would see all the NCOs and officers discussing the subjects and lessons of the day, asking questions, and correcting each other. It was fantastic to see. As a unit, during our preparation for operations and while conducting operations, we updated our knowledge of the operational standards and procedures of our coalition partners from other Western SOF, which helped us to stay interoperable with our Western allies.

HENNINGSSEN: You put great emphasis on the importance of the pre-deployment site survey for the overall success of the mission. Can you summarize this decision and offer other advice for junior partners deploying in a US-led coalition?

JAKOBSEN: A pre-deployment site survey is vital for getting off on the right foot in a mission like this. Coming from a small country and deploying at a later stage of a campaign rather than in the initial stage, you have to do a good amount of work before actually deploying. In a large coalition, you are not simply handed a unit that fits perfectly with your own competencies and capabilities, or told that these people want to be educated in a certain way, or assigned the facilities and equipment you need. There is hard work in getting all of those things done.

Additionally, we small states are not part of the big American system and we do not always know how the American regulations and requisition process work, so it takes some time to get to know those things, too. We needed to spend time understanding the logistical systems of the coalition. It is worth sacrificing some time and resources to make sure that somebody from your unit actually gets into the system and learns how the overall setup and procedures work. We had a liaison officer in Baghdad and one at CJTF-OIR (Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve) in Kuwait. They were able to both sort out the intricacies of and influence the acquisition process and intelligence sharing for us. They also attended the staff meetings and drew attention to the fact that we Danes were, in fact, there. They were the right people in the right places. This is just as important as having an instructor in place. You have to get to know the support structure, because if you do not own the mission, you have to know the coalition that does own it and how to use its system.

We also confirmed that bringing a small sum of money for quick impact projects is of the greatest importance. The coalition had not clearly defined how junior partners could obtain funds for their work, and it costs a lot of money to create a militia from scratch. Pay, water, and food, as well as equipment and weapons, are fundamental to everything else; it is only when people are rested, hydrated, and fed that they are able to learn. When you deploy to an MA operation, you have to have some money or at least resources such as water and food. When we came down to Iraq, we were not even certain whether we could get ammunition and weapons. We were simply told that it should be possible to get what we needed from the coalition. Having funds available for quick-impact projects allows you to deal with day-to-day issues in a way that, while not a long-term solution, will

At one point, we actually feared that the cohesion of the unit would collapse due to lack of basic support.

get you past small hurdles much more quickly. At one point, we actually feared that the cohesion of the unit would collapse due to lack of basic support. Great personal motivation is one thing, but if you are hungry or run out of money, you have to leave the unit to take care of yourself and your family, which may be in a refugee camp. So, once we had funds for quick-impact projects, we could pay for food and water when these were in very short supply, which was really important to maintain unit cohesion.

HENNINGSEN: That's a good point. My last question is, do you think you will be able to maintain your level of proficiency in MA at a time when NATO is putting more emphasis on counter-hybrid threats and SOF support for conventional operations?

JAKOBSEN: Being a general-purpose SOF unit, we have chosen to train for direct action and special reconnaissance, but we don't give dedicated training time to MA as a subject. The reason for this is that we do it all the time, so to speak. All team members hold, at a minimum, the rank of NCO and have learned the principles of education and instruction. They have also conducted real-life training in other army units, preparing both conscripts and professional soldiers before they apply for the Jaegercorps. The Jaegercorps does not have a dedicated training branch; we train one another and ourselves, which means that when personnel are on patrols during training, somebody will be in charge of the training in direct action and someone else will be in charge of the training in special reconnaissance. The team members regularly utilize their skills as instructors, which is the closest we get to MA training. One exception is cultural training. Cultural awareness is always important, whether you deploy in a direct action, special reconnaissance, or military assistance role. Together with the Danish Special Operations Command, we try to identify the regions that the Jaegercorps will most likely deploy to and then our intelligence section trains the teams on cultural issues relevant to those areas.

HENNINGSEN: Thank you very much for your time and thoughtful answers on a key topic for most Western SOF units. I hope that your experience may be beneficial to other SOF units in the future.

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NOTES

- 1 This interview was edited and translated from Danish. Every effort was made to ensure that the meaning and intention of the participants were not altered in any way. The ideas and opinions of all the participants are theirs alone and do not represent the official position of the Danish Defense.
- 2 National caveats are restrictions that national authorities put on force contingents that participate in international alliances.
- 3 After training, the members of the brigade returned home or to refugee camps to await deployment. During this inactive period, they were not being paid and did not have access to brigade equipment. Nevertheless, they showed up again when called for duty.



Homegrown Terrorism: **A Social Network Analysis of a Minnesota ISIS Cell**

*by MAJ Marcelle R. Burroni, US Army and
Dr. Sean F. Everton, US Naval Postgraduate School*

IN 2014, SIX SOMALI AMERICANS LIVING IN MINNESOTA—MOHAMED Abdihamid Farah, Adnan Abdihamid Farah, Abdurahman Yasin Daud, Zacharia Yusuf Abdurahman, Hanad Musse, and Guled Ali Omar—were arrested for attempting to leave the United States to join ISIS in Syria.¹ They were not alone in their attempt. Minnesota has become a prime destination for Somali refugees in the United States,² and it is also the point of origin for more than a quarter of those Americans who have attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS.³

Of course, not all foreign fighters attempt to join ISIS.⁴ Al-Qaeda and other groups attract their fair share of recruits as well, which is why researchers have put a great deal of effort into understanding who becomes a foreign fighter and developing interventions that will reduce their number in the future.⁵ Much of this research has focused on ideological and psychological factors. In this article, however, we focus on sociological factors.⁶ In particular, we use social network analysis to examine the network of friends and family surrounding those six Minnesotans who attempted to join ISIS in 2014, which will be referred to as the Minnesota ISIS network throughout this paper.



Four of the Minnesota Six men of Somali descent

Social network analysis (SNA) has been around since the early twentieth century, but only recently has it been used extensively to analyze dark—that is, covert and illegal—networks.⁷ This is not to suggest that earlier analysts were uninterested in the nature of dark networks. The sociologist Georg Simmel examined them as early as 1906, in an analysis that Bonnie Erickson expanded upon and modified in 1981.⁸ In 1993, Wayne Baker and Richard Faulkner used SNA to examine price-fixing conspiracy networks in the heavy electrical equipment industry in the 1950s and 1960s, and Malcolm Sparrow and Peter Klerks each wrote essays that explored the usefulness of SNA in tracking criminal networks.⁹ Since 9/11, however, analysts have increasingly been drawn to the use of SNA as a tool for understanding terrorist networks, inspired in large part by Valdis Krebs’s analysis of the 9/11 hijacker network, “Mapping Networks of Terrorist Cells.”¹⁰

This paper begins with a brief overview of SNA and the metrics we used in our analysis of the Minnesota ISIS network. This is followed by a description and analysis of the network, which consisted of dozens of people who expressed support for ISIS, including some who attempted to travel to Syria. We conclude with a brief reflection on the implications our analysis has for the crafting of strategies to discourage people from joining ISIS, al-Qaeda, or other jihadist organizations in the future.

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis assumes that the behavior of actors (e.g., individuals, groups, or organizations) is profoundly affected by their ties to other actors.

Social network analysis is a collection of theories and methods that assumes that the behavior of actors (e.g., individuals, groups, or organizations) is profoundly affected by their ties to other actors and by the networks in which they are embedded. SNA has become an analytical tool for studying the complexities of interactions among actors, and can be especially useful in teasing out the dynamics of terrorist groups and other types of dark networks. Rather than viewing actors as unaffected by those around them, SNA assumes that interaction patterns affect what actors do, say, and believe. It differs from more traditional variable-based approaches in that, while the latter tend to focus on actors’ attributes (e.g., gender, race, education), SNA focuses on how interaction patterns affect behavior. It highlights the fact that while an actor’s personal attributes typically do not vary across multiple social contexts, interaction patterns do. Consequently, a primary goal of SNA has been to develop theories and metrics that help analysts gain a better understanding of a network’s dynamics.

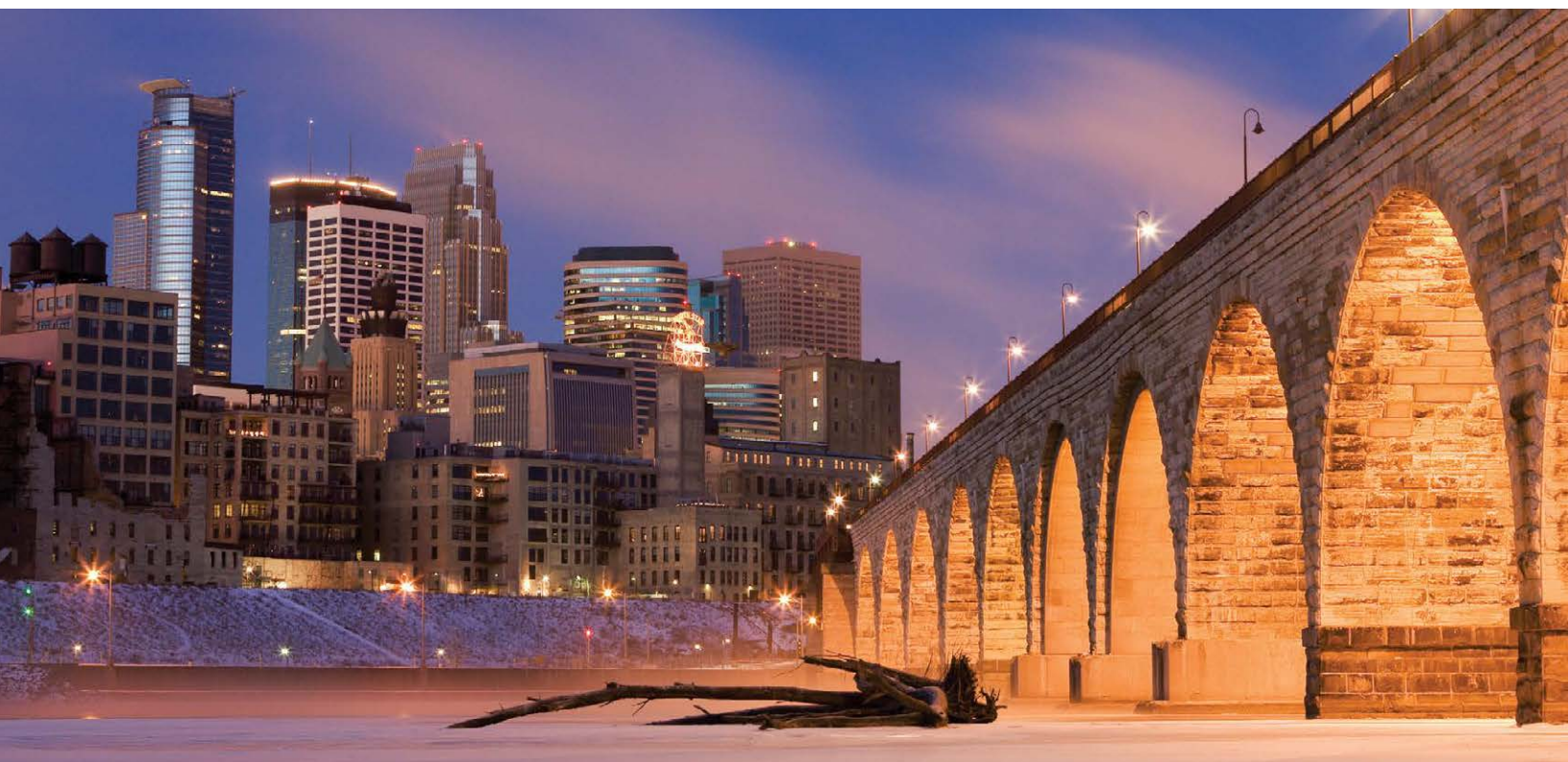
In this article, we consider both the topographical features of the Minnesota ISIS network and the centrality of the individuals who constitute it. (See the appendix on page 44 for details on how the metrics used in this article are calculated). Most topographical metrics focus on the interconnectedness and

centralization of a network. Density is the standard measure of network interconnectedness and equals the ratio of actual ties between individual actors to possible ties between them. Like all of the topographical measures used here, a network's density can range from 0.00 to 1.00. Because no single metric captures a network's interconnectedness, we will consider two additional measures: cohesiveness and compactness. Cohesiveness equals the proportion of connected pairs (either directly or indirectly) of actors in a network, while compactness equals the network's cohesiveness weighted by the average path distance between the connected pairs.¹¹ When a network includes many disconnected clusters or isolated actors, its cohesiveness and compactness scores will be quite low, whereas if there are few such isolated nodes, then those scores will be high. To put it a little differently, when the average path length between all pairs of actors equals one, then cohesiveness and compactness are the same, but when it is greater than one, which is almost always the case, compactness is less than cohesiveness. We are interested in gauging the interconnectedness of the networks examined here because it can play an important role in the effectiveness and resilience of dark networks. High levels of interconnectedness tend to improve a network's security because they make it easier to monitor behavior within the group and limit the number of external ties. However, a network that is too isolated from outside influences will have less access to important information and other material and nonmaterial resources. That is why available evidence suggests that dark networks function better when they are neither too dense nor too sparse, but instead lie somewhere between the two extremes.¹²

Similarly, studies indicate that networks that are neither too centralized nor too decentralized are more effective than those that lie on the extremes. (See note 13 for a discussion of the difference between *centrality* and *centralization*.)¹³ Why? While a high level of centralization can provide organizations with substantial command and control over their operations, it can also make them slow to adapt to a changing environment. On the other hand, organizations that are highly decentralized may be able to change course quickly, but they may lack the command and control needed to focus members on a common goal. Here, we draw on two centralization measures to explore the Minnesota ISIS network: one based on degree centrality and one on betweenness centrality. The former measures the extent to which certain actors are better connected than other members of a network, while the latter captures the degree to which certain actors lie in positions of brokerage (i.e., are in a position to possibly influence others by controlling the flow of material and non-material resources through a network) compared to other members of a network.

We also use actor centrality metrics in our analysis of the Minnesota ISIS network. We draw on four in particular—degree, closeness, betweenness, and eigenvector—to explore how “central” various actors were in terms of their traveler status: that is, whether they attempted to travel to Syria or not. Briefly, degree centrality equals the number of an actor's ties;

Downtown Minneapolis from across the Mississippi River

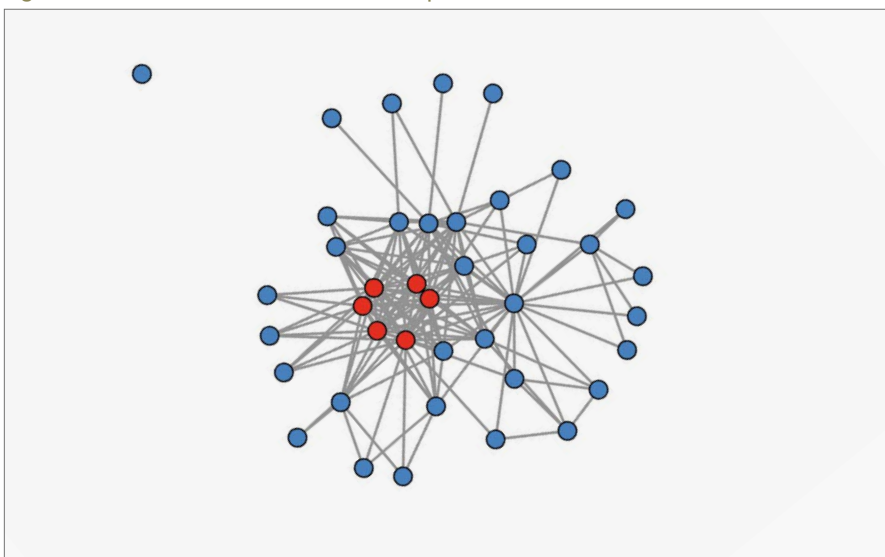


closeness captures how far (in terms of path distance) an actor is from every other actor in a network; betweenness measures the extent to which each actor lies on the shortest path between all other actors; and eigenvector weights each actor's degree centrality by the degree centrality of neighbors in the network. (See the appendix on page 44, for details on how the measures are calculated.)

Each of these four metrics reflects a different assumption about what constitutes a central actor. Degree centrality assumes that total number of ties is most important, but it does not distinguish between those ac-

tors who lie at the center of a network and those who lie on its periphery. Closeness assumes that shorter path distances between actors are more valuable, and thus, all else being equal, actors who lie toward the center of the network will score higher in importance than those on the periphery. Betweenness is often seen as a proxy for the potential to act as a broker, such as by controlling the flow of information through a network, and can differ substantially from degree centrality because actors with few ties can still score high in terms of betweenness. Finally, eigenvector, which is sometimes used as a measure for status or social capital, assumes that ties to other well-connected actors capture an actor's importance or power more accurately than the other metrics.

Figure 1: Minnesota ISIS Network: Friendship Network



The Minnesota ISIS Network: Data and Analysis

Drawing on public open-source data, we reconstructed the Minnesota ISIS network, beginning with the six individuals who conspired to travel to Syria to join ISIS.¹⁴ To these we added 18 others who had either friendship or kinship ties to the original six and who also attempted to travel to Syria. Fourteen of them succeeded and four did not. Finally, we included an additional 16 individuals who had either friendship or kinship ties to the 24 (attempted) travelers but did not attempt to travel themselves, bringing the total number of actors in the Minnesota ISIS network to 40. We could, of course, have used other types of ties to expand the network beyond the original six codefendants. However, existing research suggests that friendship and kinship networks play key roles in the development of terrorist and other types of clandestine networks.¹⁵ Thus, we limited the boundaries of our network to only those with friendship or kinship ties to the original six codefendants.

Existing research suggests that friendship and kinship networks play key roles in the development of terrorist and other types of clandestine networks.

Of particular importance to the Minnesota ISIS network were friendship ties, through which it appears to have largely mobilized.¹⁶ Figure 1 presents the friendship network, where red-colored nodes indicate the original six codefendants.¹⁷ The figure suggests that the network is fairly well-connected, cohesive, and compact. There is only a single isolated node, and the distance between actors appears short. The network also appears to be relatively centralized around the six codefendants. The topographical metrics presented in table 1, which we discuss below, confirm both of these observations.

Kinship can also play a role in recruitment and radicalization. As Mohammed Hafez notes, “Kinship recruitment, which is difficult for security agencies to observe, is facilitated by several psychological mechanisms that bind persons together towards extremism.”¹⁸ The bond of family loyalty can strengthen commitment and trust, especially when members are targeted for radicalization. Moreover, kinship networks consist of individuals who typically share beliefs and a collective

identity and whose interactions therefore will not attract the attention of authorities.¹⁹ For the Minnesota ISIS network, kinship played a role in recruitment and mobilization, albeit a much smaller one than friendship. Figure 2 presents the Minnesota ISIS network's kinship network where, once again, the red-colored nodes indicate the original six codefendants and the ties between pairs of actors indicate a kinship relationship (e.g., cousin, sibling, spouse). It is obvious even before consulting the corresponding metrics in table 1 that, compared to the friendship network, kinship is far less interconnected and centralized.

Figure 2: Minnesota ISIS Network: Kinship Network

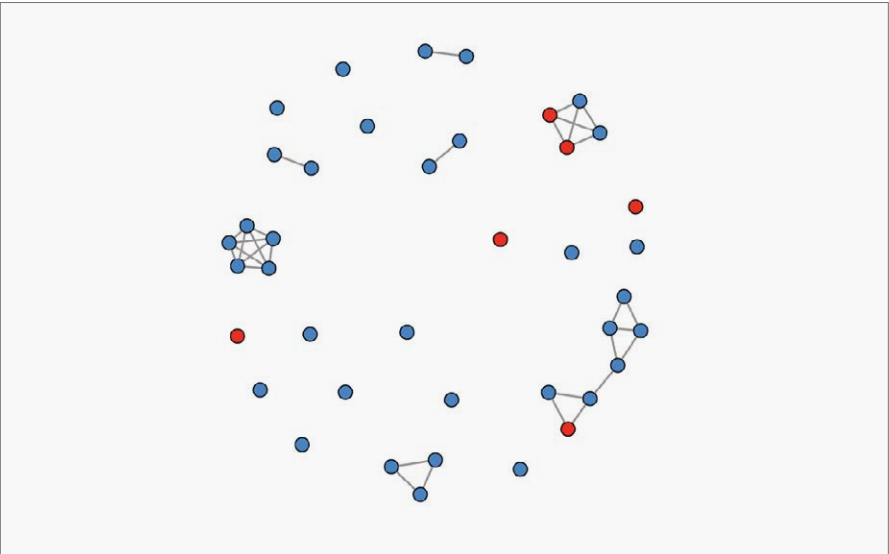


Figure 3 presents the combined network. Because it combines the friendship and kinship networks, one might assume that it should be more dense, cohesive, and compact than the two networks are by themselves. However, given the kinship network's sparsity (i.e., low level of density, interconnectedness), it is unsurprising to see that the combined network resembles the friendship network far more than it does the kinship network. In fact, visually, it is difficult to detect any substantial difference between the combined and friendship networks, in terms of either their interconnectedness or their level of centralization.²⁰

Analysts first need to determine a network’s structure before crafting any strategy for disrupting it.

The visual similarity of the friendship and combined networks illustrates why analysts who use SNA should not rely solely on visualizations, but should also draw on related metrics. Table 1 summarizes the topographical measures of the friendship, kinship, and combined networks. Recall that the topographical metrics used here range from 0.00 to 1.00, where scores approaching 0.00 indicates low levels of density, centralization, and so on, and scores approaching 1.00 indicate high levels. As we saw in figures 1 and 2, the metrics indicate that the friendship network is far more interconnected and centralized than the kinship network. The table also shows that the combined network is fairly interconnected. Compared to other known dark networks, it is moderately dense and lies toward the high end of the dark network continuum in terms of cohesiveness and compactness.²¹ The same can be said about its level of centralization.²² The centralization of dark networks tends to range from 0.00 to 0.60 for both degree (number of ties) and betweenness (lying between pairs of actors) centralization. Thus, the Minnesota ISIS network appears quite centralized in terms of degree centralization,

Table 1:Topographical Measures of Friendship, Kinship, and Combined Networks

	DENSITY	COHESIVENESS	COMPACTNESS	DEGREE CENTRALIZATION	BETWEENNESS CENTRALIZATION
Friendship	0.203	0.950	0.543	0.462	0.284
Kinship	0.040	0.055	0.046	0.066	0.012
Combined	0.242	1.000	0.585	0.501	0.237

and moderately centralized in terms of betweenness centralization.

What are the potential implications of these results? The network's moderate degree of interconnectedness suggests that it would have been difficult to infiltrate, but it is not so interconnected that it would be impossible to identify members located on its periphery who could have been turned into informants against the more radical members. Its high level of centralization indicates that the network could have been disrupted or destabilized by the removal of key individuals. In fact, this particular network *did* suffer the loss of several key individuals when the six codefendants were arrested, which appears to have caused a significant and perhaps fatal disruption of the network. More importantly, our analysis suggests that other dark networks with topographical features similar to those of the Minnesota ISIS network would be vulnerable to a similar disruption strategy. We need to be clear, however, that not all dark networks are as centralized and interconnected as was the Minnesota ISIS network, and any substantial differences should suggest the adoption of alternative disruption strategies. For example, a sparse network—one with only a few ties between members—might be vulnerable to infiltration, while a less centralized one could prove more resilient following the removal of key actors. In other words, analysts first need to determine a network's structure before crafting any strategy for disrupting it.²³ Simply assuming that the removal of central members will do the trick would be a mistake.²⁴

Next, we examined how the centrality of the members of the network varies by traveler status: that is, whether they attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS. Figure 4 depicts the network with the nodes colored by traveler status. Red (6) continues to indicate the original codefendants; dark blue (14) are those who successfully traveled to Syria; light blue (4) are those who attempted but failed to travel to Syria; green (16) are those who did not attempt to travel to Syria. As we have already noted, the codefendants lie close to the center of the network, but now we can see that while those who attempted to travel, either successfully (dark blue) or unsuccessfully (light blue), lie close to the codefendants, they are clearly not as central as the six who were arrested. Even more peripheral to the network are those who did not attempt to travel at all (green).

Centrality metrics bear this observation out. Table 2 summarizes the average centrality scores of network members, broken down by traveler status.²⁵ Here we have reported the average raw degree centrality scores, which equal the average number of ties for each category of traveler. For the other three measures of centrality, we have reported their *normalized* scores, which range from 0.00 to 1.00, where higher scores indicate higher levels of centrality. (Again, see the appendix on page 44 for details on how the measures are calculated.) The scores indicate that

Figure 3: Minnesota ISIS Network: Combined Network

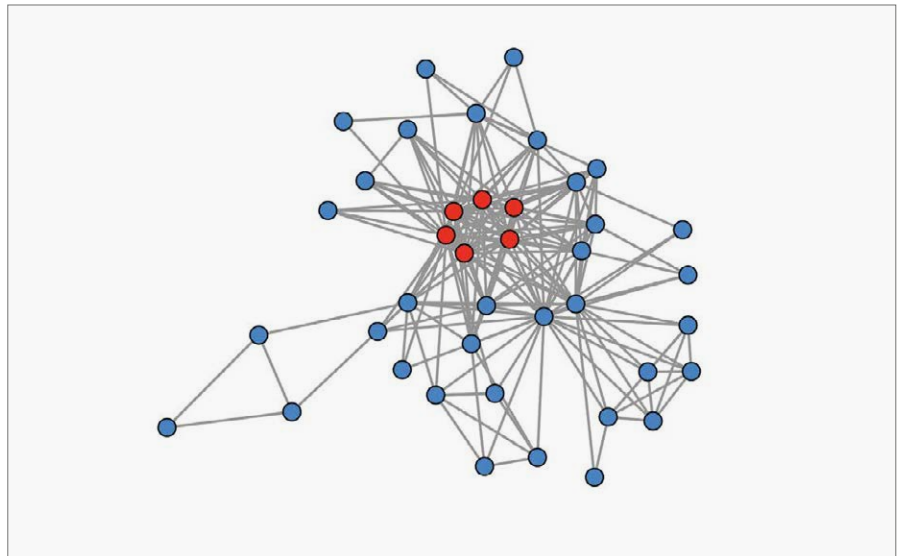


Figure 4: Minnesota ISIS Network: Combined Network by Traveler Status

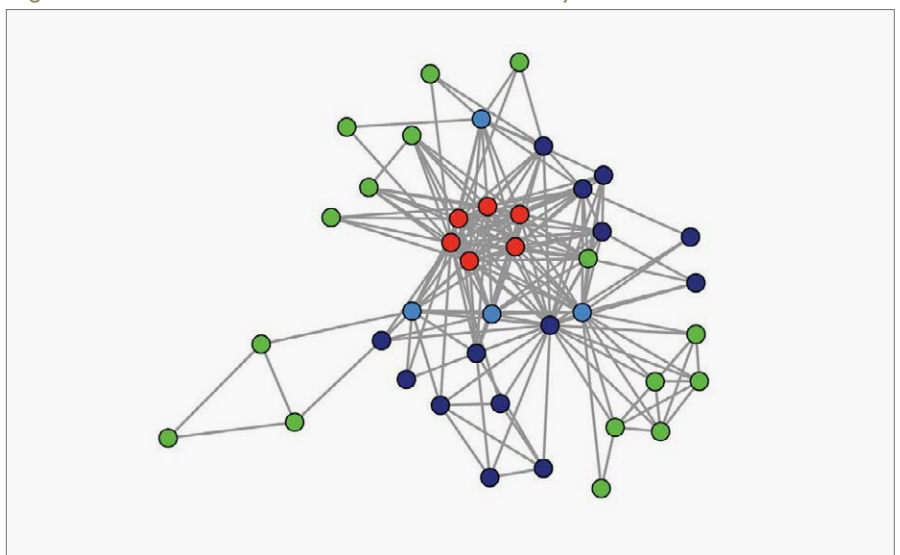


Table 2: Traveler Status Average Centrality

	AVERAGE DEGREE (RAW)	AVERAGE BETWEENNESS (NORMALIZED)	AVERAGE CLOSENESS (NORMALIZED)	AVERAGE EIGENVECTOR (NORMALIZED)
Codefendants	19.50	0.054	0.657	0.385
Attempted but Failed to Travel	15.50	0.082	0.597	0.291
Successfully Traveled	8.50	0.023	0.530	0.167
Non-travelers	5.00	0.004	0.443	0.086

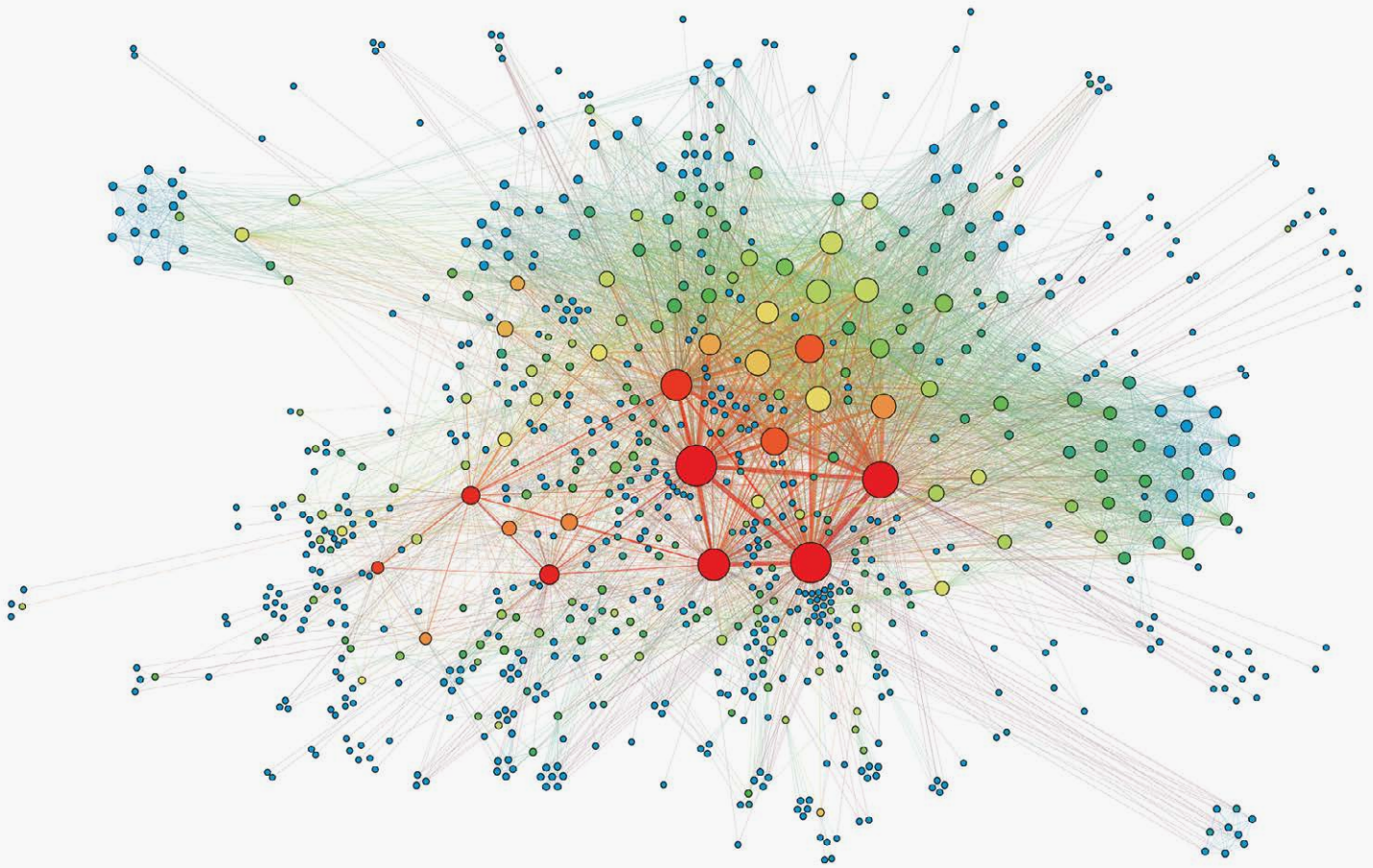
the six original codefendants score highest on three out of the four measures. However, it is interesting that all of those who attempted to travel, whether successfully or not, score much higher in terms of centrality than those who did not try. We know from previous research that individuals who lie on the periphery of a group are less likely to ascribe to the group's norms and more likely to defect (i.e., leave the network),²⁶ so these results imply that those who were more weakly tied to the core of the Minnesota ISIS network were less likely to be influenced by those who wanted to travel to Syria. It also suggests that a possible way to disrupt other dark networks that share the Minnesota ISIS network's core-periphery structure would be to identify individuals on the periphery as possible "entry" points for counter-radicalization messaging to diminish the members' enthusiasm for becoming foreign fighters. That is, individuals who lie on the periphery of a network similar to this could be prime candidates for being turned and then used to help influence other network members.

Conclusion

In this paper, we used SNA to examine a network of individuals connected through friendship and kinship ties, including some who attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS. We explored the network in terms of its topography and the centrality of various members. Our topographical analysis found that the network was relatively interconnected and centralized, which suggested that the removal of key individuals would significantly disrupt it. This appears in fact to have happened when the six codefendants were arrested. Moreover, our analysis suggests that dark networks that share the topographical features of the Minnesota ISIS network, i.e., one that is moderately to highly centralized and interconnected, would be vulnerable to a similar disruption strategy. As we noted, however, not all dark networks are as centralized and interconnected as the Minnesota ISIS network, so authorities should first examine a dark network's structure prior to crafting any strategy for its disruption.

A possible way to disrupt other dark networks would be to identify individuals on the periphery as possible "entry" points for counter-radicalization messaging.

Our analysis of the centrality of network members in terms of their traveler status found that those who attempted to travel to Syria, whether successfully or not, scored much higher in terms of the four measures of centrality considered here compared to those who did not try. This is consistent with research that has found that actors lying on the periphery of a network are less likely to ascribe to its norms and more likely to leave the network. This suggests not only that peripheral members of the Minnesota ISIS network were less likely to be influenced by the network's core members who wanted to join ISIS in Syria, but also that other dark networks that share a core-periphery structure similar to the Minnesota ISIS network would exhibit similar patterns. In other words, a possible strategy for disrupting other foreign-fighter dark networks might be to identify peripheral members as potential defectors who could influence others in the network to leave as well.



Social Network Analysis Visualization

We want to close with a word of caution. The use of social network analysis to craft strategies should not be confused with its use for decision-making. The selection of strategies depends on a number of issues, and social network analysis should never be seen as a substitute for other critical elements in the decision-making process, such as knowledge of context, risks and costs, and potential for unintended consequences. We believe social network analysis, which is just one tool in the strategic toolkit, can inform decisions but should not determine them.²⁷

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Appendix: Mathematical Details of Social Network Measures

Degree, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector centrality are actor-level measures and are thus calculated for each member in a network. Raw (i.e., non-normalized) degree centrality is calculated using equation 1.

$$C_i^{DEG} = \sum_{j=1}^n x_{ij} \quad (1)$$

The degree centrality of a given actor (i) equals the sum of all ties from i to other nodes (x_{ij}); here, the value of each tie equals one (i.e., a tie is present or not) and, thus, an actor's degree centrality equals the sum of ties each actor has to other actors in the network.

For betweenness centrality,²⁸ if we let g_{ij} indicate the number of the shortest paths between actor i to actor j (geodesics) and g_{ijk} indicate the number of geodesic paths from actor i to actor j that pass through actor k , then an actor's betweenness centrality is expressed by equation 2,

$$C_i^{BET} = \sum_k \sum_j \frac{g_{ijk}}{g_{ij}} \quad (2)$$

which measures actor k 's share of all shortest paths from actor i to actor j , summed across all choices of actors i and j . Because betweenness centrality is a function of the number of pairs of actors, we normalize it by dividing equation 2 by the number of pairs of actors that do not include actor k , which equals $(n-1)(n-2)/2$ (see equation 3).

$$C_i^{NBET} = \frac{\sum_k \sum_j \frac{g_{ijk}}{g_{ij}}}{\frac{(n-1)(n-2)}{2}} \quad (3)$$

There are numerous closeness centrality measures. Here, we use average reciprocal distance (ARD) closeness because it can be used with networks that, like the friendship and kinship networks analyzed here, are disconnected or include isolates.²⁹ As calculated by equation 4, ARD closeness sums and averages the reciprocal distance (d) between every pair (i and j) of actors:

$$C_i^{RD} = \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{1}{d_{ij}} \quad (4)$$

ARD closeness is normalized with equation 5, which places the number of other actors (i.e., $n-1$) in the denominator. This is because it reaches its maximum when an actor is next to all other actors in the network (i.e., when it equals $n-1$), which means that its normalized score will equal 1.00 when it is one step away from every other actor in the network:

$$C_i^{ARD} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n \frac{1}{d_{ij}}}{n-1} \quad (5)$$

Eigenvector centrality takes into account the number of ties an actor has to others. It differs from degree centrality because it assumes that ties to highly central actors are more important than are ties to peripheral ones, so it weights an actor's initial degree centrality by the degree centrality of its neighbors.³⁰ Formally, if A is a network, then we capture this by making actor i 's centrality proportional to the average of the centralities of i 's neighbors. Raw eigenvector centrality is calculated using equation 6,

$$C_i^{EIG} = \frac{1}{\lambda} \sum_{j=1}^n A_{ij} x_j \quad (6)$$

where λ is a constant and i 's associated eigenvalue (generally, the largest eigenvalue). Normalized eigenvector centrality is calculated with equation 7, which divides raw eigenvector by the maximum difference possible:

$$C_i^{NEIG} = \frac{\frac{1}{\lambda} \sum_{j=1}^n A_{ij} x_j}{C_{Max}^{EIG}} \quad (7)$$

Density (equation 8) is defined as the total number of ties divided by the total possible number of ties:

$$d = \frac{L}{n(n-1)/2} \quad (8)$$

where L refers to the actual number of ties in a network and n to the number of actors in the network. Because each actor can potentially be connected to all other actors, in undirected networks (i.e., where ties between actors

are reciprocated) such as we have here, the total possible number of ties equals $n(n-1)/2$.

Cohesion (equation 9) equals the proportion of all pairs of actors that can either directly or indirectly reach one another.³¹ More formally, given a matrix R where $r_{ij} = 1$ if i can reach j and $r_{ij} = 0$ if i cannot, cohesion is defined as follows:

$$C^{COH} = \frac{\sum_{i \neq j} r_{ij}}{n(n-1)} \quad (9)$$

Compactness (equation 10) is similar, except that the score is weighted by the average (path) distance between all pairs of actors, where d_{ij} = the path distance between i and j if i can reach j and 0 otherwise:³²

$$C^{COM} = \frac{\sum_{i \neq j} (1/d_{ij})}{n(n-1)} \quad (10)$$

The two scores are identical when the distance between all instances of i and $j = 1$, but when the path distance between i and j becomes greater than 1, compactness is lower than cohesion.

The standard measure of centralization (equation 11) is determined by using the variation in actor centrality within the network. More variation yields higher network centralization scores, while less variation yields lower scores. Formally, centralization equals

$$C = \frac{\sum C_{max} - C(n_i)}{\max \sum C_{max} - C(n_i)} \quad (11)$$

where C_{max} equals the largest centrality score for all actors, $C(n_i)$ is the centrality score for actor n_i , and $\max \sum C_{max} - C(n_i)$ is the theoretical maximum possible sum of differences in actor centrality. In other words, network centralization is the ratio of the actual sum of differences in actor centrality to the theoretical maximum, yielding (like density) a score somewhere between 0.0 and 1.0. In general, the larger a network's centralization index is, the more likely it is that a single actor is very central while the other actors are not; thus, the index can be seen as measuring how unequal the distribution of individual actor values is. Finally, because network centralization scores are based on the type of centrality being estimated




(e.g., degree, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector), we need to interpret them in light of the estimated centrality metric. For example, because degree centrality counts the ties each individual actor has, we would expect that centralization based on degree would measure the extent to which one or a handful of actors possess numerous ties while others in the network do not. By contrast, a centralization measure based on betweenness centrality, which measures the extent to which actors lie between other actors in the network, could be interpreted as indicating the degree to which some of a network's actors are in a position of brokerage.

NOTES

- 1 United States of America v. Mohamed Abdihamid Farah, Adnan Abdihamid Farah, Abdurahman Yasin Daud, Zacharia Yusuf Abdurahman, Hanad Mustafe Musse, and Guled Ali Omar (Criminal Complaint, US District Court for the District of Minnesota, 2015): <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Abdurahman%2C%20Z.%20Complaint.pdf>
- 2 Astead W. Herndon, "These People Aren't Coming From Norway: Refugees in a Minnesota City Face a Backlash," *New York Times*, 20 June 2019: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/20/us/politics/minnesota-refugees-trump.html>
- 3 Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel* (Washington, D.C.: Homeland Security Committee, 2015): <https://homeland.house.gov/imo/media/doc/TaskForceFinalReport.pdf>
- 4 Foreign fighters are defined as individuals who travel to a foreign conflict zone in order to train and/or fight with a particular group such as ISIS or al-Qaeda.
- 5 Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Seamus Hughes, and Bennett Clifford, *The Travelers: American Jihadists in Syria and Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University Program on Extremism, 2018): <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/TravelersAmericanJihadistsinSyriaandIraq.pdf>
- 6 This article is adapted from Marcelle R. Burrone, "The Homegrown Jihadi Terrorist: The Threat of ISIS-Inspired Radicalization in the United States" (master's thesis, US Naval Postgraduate School, September 2018): https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/60369/18Sep_Burroni_Marcelle.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- 7 Jörg Raab and H. Brinton Milward, "Dark Networks as Problems," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 13, no. 4 (October 2003): 413–39.
- 8 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 4 (January 1906): 441–98; Bonnie H. Erickson, "Secret Societies and Social Structure," *Social Forces* 60, no. 1 (September 1981): 188–210.
- 9 Wayne E. Baker and Robert R. Faulkner, "The Social Organization of Conspiracy: Illegal Networks in the Heavy Electrical Equipment Industry," *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 6 (December 1993): 837–60; Malcolm K. Sparrow, "The Application of Network Analysis to Criminal Intelligence: An Assessment of the Prospects," *Social Networks* 13, no. 3 (September 1991): 251–74; Peter Klerks, "The Network Paradigm Applied to Criminal Organisations: Theoretical Nitpicking or a Relevant Doctrine for Investigators? Recent Developments in the Netherlands," *Connections* 24, no. 3 (2001–2002): 53–65.
- 10 Valdis E. Krebs, "Mapping Networks of Terrorist Cells," *Connections* 24, no. 3 (2001–2002): 43–52. Examples of these follow-on works include an analysis of 172 Islamic terrorist operatives affiliated with the global Salafi jihad, in Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); an exploration of those involved in the 2002 Bali bombing, in Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 6 (2006): 559–75; the identification of key players in the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) (FARC), in Daniel Cunningham, Sean F. Everton, Gregory Wilson, Carlos Padilla, and Douglas Zimmerman, "Brokers and Key Players in the Internationalization of the FARC," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 6 (2013): 477–502; and an edited volume that includes a number of excellent essays exploring the nature of terrorist and criminal networks, in Luke M. Gerdes, ed., *Illuminating Dark Networks: The Study of Clandestine Groups and Organizations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- 11 A *path* is defined as a sequence of actors and ties in which no actor between the first and last actor occurs more than once, whereas the *path distance* between two actors is the number of steps between the two actors. (If there is one actor between two people, the number of steps = 2. If there are two actors between two people, then the number of steps = 3.)
- 12 Sean F. Everton, "Network Topography, Key Players and Terrorist Networks," *Connections* 32, no. 1 (2012): 12–19.
- 13 People often confuse centralization with centrality metrics. Centrality metrics are actor-level measures; they estimate the power or influence of individual network members. Centralization measures, by contrast, are network-level measures; they are measures concerned with a network's overall structure.
- 14 In addition to the original criminal complaint cited in endnote 1 (United States of America v. Mohamed Abdihamid Farah et al.), we drew on numerous newspaper articles, legal documents, and law enforcement reports to build out the Minnesota ISIS network.
- 15 Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.
- 16 Meleagrou-Hitchens, Hughes, and Clifford, *The Travelers*, 53.
- 17 Network graphs were generated using statnet, a package developed for analyzing and visualizing social networks. See Mark S. Handcock, David R. Hunter, Carter T. Butts, Steven M. Goodreau, and Martina Morris, "statnet: Software Tools for the Representation, Visualization, Analysis and Simulation of Network Data," *Journal of Statistical Software* 24, no. 1 (2008): 1548–7660: <https://www.jstatsoft.org/article/view/v024i01>
- 18 Mohammed M. Hafez, "The Ties that Bind: How Terrorists Exploit Family Bonds," *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 2 (February 2016): 15–17.
- 19 Ibid.

- 20 The term “sparse” indicates a network that scores low in terms of interconnectedness (density): that is, there are very few ties between nodes. The sparse-to-dense continuum differs from the decentralized-to-centralized continuum. In fact, sparse networks can be very centralized. Imagine a network where everyone only has ties to a single individual: the number of actual ties over the possible number of ties would be quite low (sparse), but the network would be highly centralized.
- 21 Daniel Cunningham, Sean Everton, and Philip Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks: A Strategic Framework for the Use of Social Network Analysis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Kathryn Oliver, “Covert Networks: Structures, Processes, and Types,” (working paper, Mitchell Centre for Social Network Analysis, University of Manchester, 2014): http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/schools/soas/research/mitchell/covertnetworks/wp/working_paper1.pdf.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Nancy Roberts and Sean F. Everton, “Strategies for Combating Dark Networks,” *Journal of Social Structure* 12, no. 2 (2011): <http://www.cmu.edu/joss/content/articles/volume12//RobertsEverton.pdf>; Nancy Roberts and Sean Everton, “Monitoring and Disrupting Dark Networks: A Bias Toward the Center and What It Costs Us,” *Middle East Review of Public Administration* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1-18: <https://merpa.scholasticahq.com/article/577-monitoring-and-disrupting-dark-networks-a-bias-toward-the-center-and-what-it-costs-us>
- 24 Ibid. See also John Arquilla, *Aspects of Netwar and the Conflict with al Qaeda* (Monterey, Calif.: Information Operations Center, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009).
- 25 Centrality scores were calculated with the software package, UCINET 6.0: Stephen P. Borgatti, Martin G. Everett, and Linton C. Freeman. UCINET for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis (Harvard, Mass.: Analytical Technologies, 2002).
- 26 For example, see Pamela A. Popielarz and J. Miller McPherson, “On the Edge or in Between: Niche Position, Niche Overlap, and the Duration of Voluntary Association Memberships,” *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 3 (November 1995): 698–720; Sean F. Everton, *Networks and Religion: Ties That Bind, Loose, Build-up, and Tear Down* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 116–120.
- 27 Roberts and Everton, “Strategies for Combating Dark Networks.”
- 28 Linton C. Freeman, “A Set of Measures of Centrality Based on Betweenness,” *Sociometry* 40, no. 1 (1977): 35–41.
- 29 Stephen P. Borgatti, “Identifying Sets of Key Players in a Social Network,” *Computational & Mathematical Organization Theory* 12 (2006): 21–34.
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Special CTX Interview

Major General Eduardo Zapateiro, Colombian Army

*Interviewed by Dr. Douglas Borer,
US Naval Postgraduate School*

ON 11 APRIL 2019, ON THE SIDELINES OF THE PACIFIC SPECIAL Operations Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, Dr. Doug Borer of the US Naval Postgraduate School interviewed Major General Eduardo Zapateiro, commander of the *Comando Conjunto Operaciones Especiales* (CCOES: Joint Special Operations Command), Colombian Army. (LTC Oscar Garzon, J5, CCOES, interpreted.) They discussed MG Zapateiro's experience in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism in Colombia, where an extremely violent decades-long insurgency by the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was brought to a negotiated end in 2016.

DOUGLAS BORER: General, please tell us a little about yourself.

MG EDUARDO ZAPATEIRO: I'm currently the Joint Special Operations Commander in Colombia. I've been working in the special operations community for about 30 years, since I was a lieutenant, and have commanded many different special operations units. I founded and was the first commander of Commando Battalion No. 1 from 2002 until 2005, after which I served as the commander of the Army Joint Special Operations Command (CCOES) until 2010. A few months ago I returned to CCOES as commander at the strategic level. In between my times as CCOES commander, I served as a brigade commander and as director of the Colombian Military Academy.

BORER: Over the course of your career, what changes have you seen in Colombia's counterterrorism strategies?

ZAPATEIRO: In 35 years of experience, I have seen significant and fundamental changes in the dynamics of strategy making and decision making that have improved the security conditions for Colombia. We've been able to build this strategy over time because we were able to analyze the way the insurgents (the FARC and some other groups) acted and then use that information to put together a strategic review. Based on that review, we designed and developed a concept that not only fits the national and political objectives of the government, but also addresses some of the social and economic factors that have been the drivers of conflict. Although it's not necessarily the SOF's role to examine these factors, based on what I have seen in the past I believe it is important to address them.

We designed and developed a concept that not only fits the objectives of the government, but also addresses some of the social and economic factors that have been the drivers of conflict.

In the early stage of this conflict, which lasted for more than 60 years, we weren't able to understand the problem properly, but we have since developed a more holistic and analytic approach. This learning posture became possible due to our basic willingness to understand what we were doing right or wrong. This approach allowed us day by day to strengthen our development of strategies, our operational planning, and our decision making. As a result, our tactical efforts resulted in a number of outcomes that fulfilled the end state of our strategy. So our counterterrorism strategy has evolved from a more strictly military perspective to a more integrated perspective. Military action becomes a driver for creating the conditions for political authorities to implement social investments and economic initiatives that can help to address the socioeconomic conditions that led to violence in the first place.

BORER: When you look back, what have been your most important successes and failures?

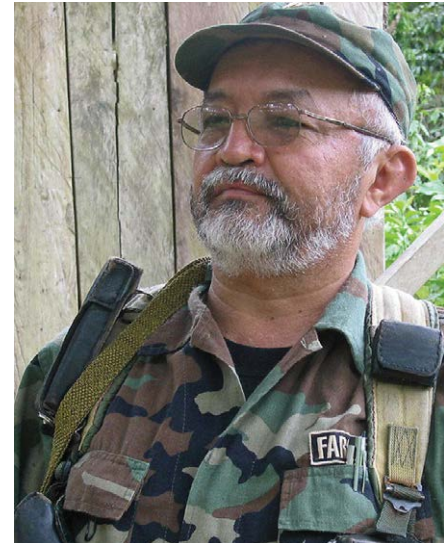
ZAPATEIRO: First, I would point out that those successes have not been mine. They are due to the fact that I have under my command men and women whose efforts have achieved success. In the end, I only provide them with guidelines by issuing the orders to be executed; they're the ones who plan carefully with dedication and execute all of their missions in a surgical and very effective manner.

Out of the operational successes that my team has built, I would mention five in particular.

The first is Operation Colombia, which was the first substantial contact I had with special operations. The raid, which occurred on 9 December 1990, targeted the leadership of the FARC in the jungle after a failed peace process. It was the first time that we attempted to do a joint operation using all the means available to us at the time, and it was successful because we were determined to make it so. It was one of my best experiences as a general officer; it taught me what I could implement and what I could improve at a senior level as a battalion commander.

Next is Operation Fénix, which took place on 1 March 2008, during which we were able to hit the first tier of the FARC leadership. Raúl Reyes, a senior leader of the FARC, was neutralized near the border of Ecuador by the use of a strategic air attack followed by a SOF raid. This was the first time that we hit the very heart of the FARC leadership. This proved to us that being consistent in both military planning and developing capabilities, as we did for this operation with the support of our US allies, made us more effective in conducting our military operations.

The third one to remember is Operation Zorro. In Spanish, *zorro* means "fox." Operation Zorro was our first effort to carry out our own reconnaissance in order to identify the strategic structure that was responsible for all drug trafficking in the southeast portion of the country. Based on



Raul Reyes, FARC

our reconnaissance, we then conducted an ambush that took out 35 to 45 of those terrorists, impacting them so long and so hard that they were not able to engage in drug trafficking for a long time in that region of the country.

Operation Chameleon was the first to succeed by using deceptive means, sending soldiers into the FARC camp disguised as guerrillas.

Fourth is Operation Chameleon, which was a hostage rescue operation using armed force. There were, of course, other hostage rescue operations: Operation Hacking, which was enabled by a SOF operation from the US side; Operation Willing Spirit, which was the prelude to the success of Operation Hacking; and Operation Dixon, which was a Colombian operation. In Operation Chameleon, the military intelligence operation was the first to succeed by using deceptive means, sending soldiers into the FARC camp disguised as guerrillas. We were able to rescue four hostages who had been held in captivity in the jungle for ten years. But it was also important because it was the first time that we used force without any harm coming to the hostages.

The last one to mention is Operation Ezequiel, which was carried out in the first quarter of 2019. There were some remnants of the FARC that were continuing to engage in drug trafficking and money laundering and other aspects of transnational organized crime. We were able to put together an operation that combined national police intelligence and joint assets, including a special reconnaissance

team with a sniper team embedded in it. We were able to neutralize this high-value target and disable the structure of the remaining FARC organization, which had returned to the persistent use of violence and was having a heavy impact on the population.

As for failures, although they were frustrating, they were also learning experiences. I could say that I have had many more failures than successes, but I learned a lot from them. We all care about the lives of our soldiers because they are the ones staying out there and working to provide us safety. So what we want to do is to learn from those failures or from different frustrations that we have overcome so that we will not ever repeat them.

BORER: Let me be clear: you are saying that you learned more from your failures than from your successes?

ZAPATEIRO: Yes.

BORER: What do you like best about your career? Is there anything that you would want to change about it?

ZAPATEIRO: What I have liked the most throughout the 35 years of my career are all of the changes that I have lived through day by day, and the way that this military life has demanded these changes, so that we are always learning how to be more effective in conducting our assigned missions. If I could change something in my career, I would like to start all over again, to be a soldier again,

We all know the problems, and we may know the solutions, but implementing the actions to overcome what has not been done right will take more time.

The rural area of Caloto, Cauca Department, Colombia, still sees violence, especially against peasant leaders.



serving my country, but in a stronger position to be able to make decisions, to be able to implement what we have learned out of all these different learning experiences. We all know the problems, and we may know the solutions, but implementing the actions to overcome what has not been done right will take more time in order to be effective. Sometimes we are more cautious because we have to fulfill legal requirements and there are aspects that constrain our time when it comes to implementing these decisions, but if there are things I or the institution can do to improve, that will strengthen the institution for future generations.

BORER: How do you align the goals and interests of your international partners, like the United States, with your own national interests?

ZAPATEIRO: The United States of America has always been our best ally. That's why Colombia's international relations policy uses the Latin dictum *respice polum*, which means "look to the North Star;" in other words, we need to look to the United States. That was one of the positions established by President Marco Fidel Suárez in the 1920s, and we still do that. All of our foreign policy objectives align with those of the international system. This makes it easy for Colombia to align itself with the objectives of the foreign policy of the United States, especially those that strengthen our capabilities in both the military and the government, and for all these great endeavors on the strategic level. Colombia constantly maintains the national interest as the priority, setting its strategic objectives through public policy related to defense and security that aligns with the war plans and campaign plans of the services. The unit I command has a distinctive campaign plan. All of these plans are aligned to deal with drug trafficking, transnational trade, and stability factors, and not just at the internal level; they also have an impact on our more important regional security which, in the end, will affect global security.

BORER: Thank you very much. I like to end my interviews with this question and I'm very curious about what you have to say. If you were "King for the Day" and could make a single change to your country, what would it be?

ZAPATEIRO: If I were to have that opportunity, I would give my country better public policies that would allow the population to fulfill their basic needs, avoid creating any grievances, and improve and support the building of a better nation for the benefit of all the people. I'd support their social, economic, and political decisions by using the military forces as necessary to secure a more stable environment in which the people need only care about the development and welfare of themselves and of their families.

BORER: Thank you, sir.

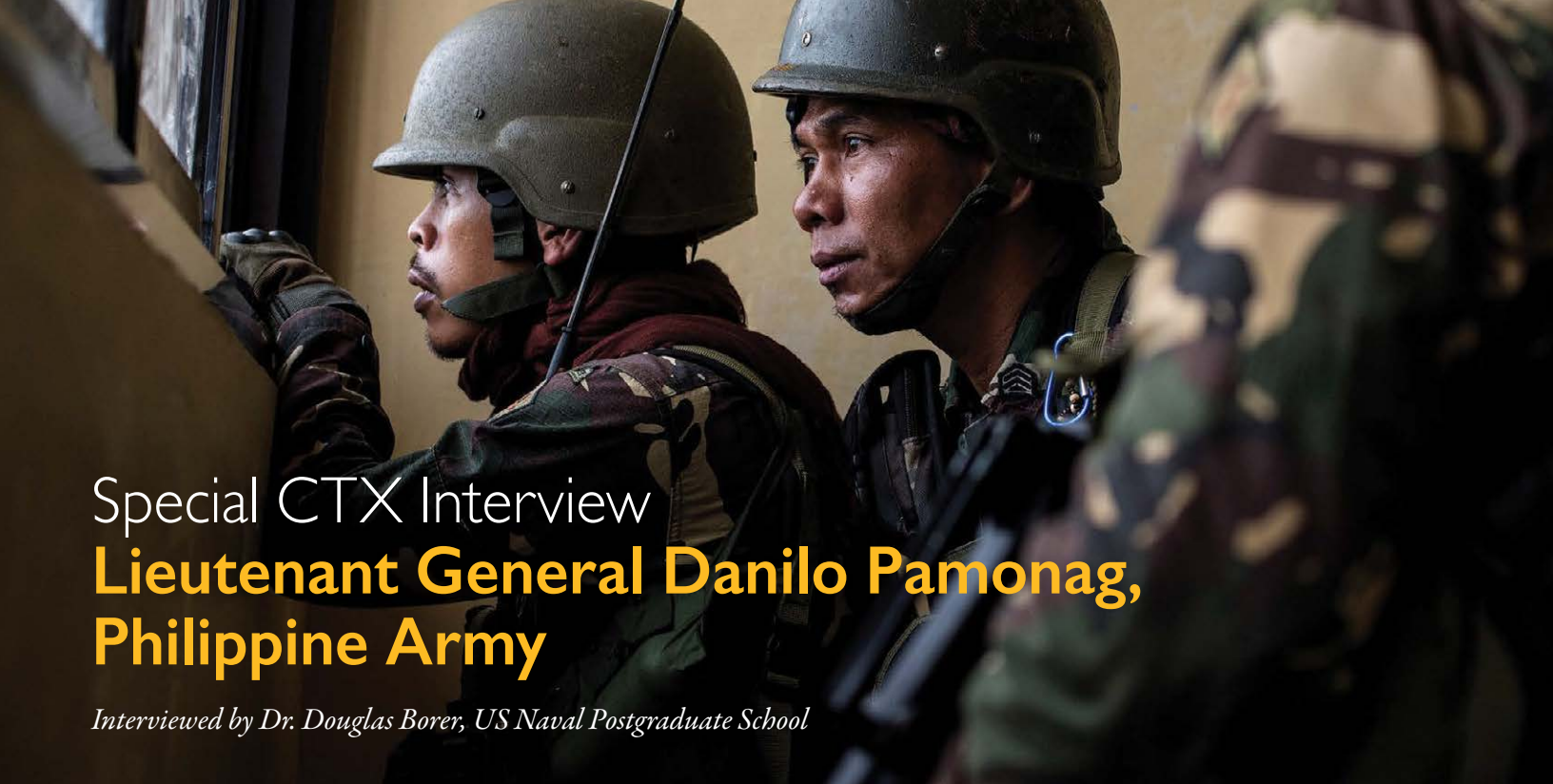
ZAPATEIRO: It was my pleasure.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MG Eduardo Zapateiro is commander of the Colombian Joint Special Operations Command.

Dr. Douglas Borer teaches defense analysis at the US Naval Postgraduate School.

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Special CTX Interview

Lieutenant General Danilo Pamonag, Philippine Army

Interviewed by Dr. Douglas Borer, US Naval Postgraduate School

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DANILO PAMONAG, RETIRED Commander of the Philippines SOF, was a key speaker at PASOC, where he described the 2017 Battle of Marawi against ISIS-aligned groups on the island of Mindanao. Following PASOC, Dr. Douglas Borer of the US Naval Postgraduate School interviewed LTG Pamonag by email.

DOUGLAS BORER: Over the course of your career, what changes have you seen in the counterterrorism (CT) strategies used in the Philippines?

DANILO PAMONAG: Our CT strategies are becoming clearer and more focused. Our experiences during the Zamboanga Crisis in 2013 and the Marawi Crisis in 2017 taught us to be more proactive and coordinated. We made tremendous leaps and bounds in guarding our porous international borders, especially those in the southern Philippines, by enhancing our “Tri-Border Patrol,” which is being done in collaboration with Indonesia and Malaysia. We’ve increased the level of intelligence sharing with our regional partners to prevent terrorist infiltration. We also enhanced the social safety net, again particularly in the southern Philippines, as a measure to prevent extremist ideology and radicalization from spreading among our youth, and are taking steps to de-radicalize those who already follow extremist ideologies. We now engage with and consult indigenous tribal and religious leaders and hear their wisdom about how best to promote cooperation and security in the region. And we give increased importance to the roles of social media and information operations in countering the spread of extremist ideology. All of

Philippine Army Scout Rangers peek from a school window during a mission to flush out Islamist militant snipers in Marawi, on the southern island of Mindanao, on 6 June 2017.

these factors have helped us to more effectively contain the threat of terrorism in our country.

BORER: What would you consider to be your most important successes?

PAMONAG: The most important successes in my career occurred when I served as the ground commander of the two bloodiest urban battles the Philippine security forces have fought in recent memory: the Zamboanga Siege and the Marawi Siege. Both entailed total commitment and dedication in order to rescue the hostages, who were being used as human shields, and to liberate the cities from the clutches of the terrorists. After the smoke of battle had cleared in both incidents, we (the military forces) were the last men standing on the battleground, the hostages were rescued, and the Filipino flag was flying over each city. Neither victory was measured by the number of terrorists killed or firearms recovered. Instead, we measured them by the liberation of the cities, and by the ability of innocent civilians to return to their communities and start their lives anew.

BORER: What lessons did you learn from those successes?

PAMONAG: I became more confident in my actions and decisions. The experience I gained in 2013 as ground commander during the Zamboanga Siege served me well when I was called upon again to lead the troops during

the Marawi Siege. However, in the time between the two battles, our enemies had become more complex, sophisticated, and barbaric. The homegrown terrorists had been joined by foreign terrorist fighters, and their equipment, techniques, and tactics had improved. They used massive IEDs, drones, interconnected tunnels, and powerful sniper rifles and scopes. They had also become more barbaric and brutal, engaging in actions that were beyond the comprehension of humanity and compassion: they burned and decapitated our dead soldiers, raped women hostages, and killed non-Muslim hostages.

BORER: How do you align the goals and interests of your international partners, such as the United States, with your own national interests?

PAMONAG: Our goals and interests stem from our duly constituted task to defend the freedom and sovereignty of our nation. Allied nations like the United States provided us with good opportunities to improve our defense posture and capability through participation in regional symposiums and forums, bilateral exercises, intelligence exchanges and training, and capacity-building activities, among others. Some of the two nations' goals and interests are aligned due to the nature of our closeness as long-standing allies.

BORER: What do you like best about your career? Is there anything you would want to change about it?

PAMONAG: I retired from the military in January 2019, after almost 38 years in the service. I firmly believe that military service is the most noble profession that a man or a woman could have. I never regretted a single day of my life in the military. I loved my military career so much that it became my passion and my way of life.

My country has been fighting insurgencies for almost six decades. We are tired, and we want to end the conflicts.

BORER: If you could be “King for the Day” and make a single change to your country, what would it be?

PAMONAG: To end the hostilities there. My country has been fighting insurgencies for almost six decades. We are tired, and we want to end the conflicts with the communist insurgencies and local terrorist groups. Our countrymen deserve peace and development free from troubles, fighting, and other security issues or threats. Filipinos have

suffered under one of the longest internal conflicts in the world. I believe we all deserve to wake up one day in a state of harmony: a happy family, a happy community, a happy nation. With the Philippines' abundance of rich natural resources, I believe that we can achieve great heights in development and progress, which is something that we have been dreaming about for a long time. I want my children and grandchildren to experience the goodness of life in a tranquil nation.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

LTG (Ret.) Danilo Pamong serves in the Philippine government.

Dr. Douglas Borer teaches defense analysis at the US Naval Postgraduate School.

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Local officials visit the main battle area in Marawi for the first time after the end of the fighting.





Ethics and Insights On Courage

by Paul Bloomfield, University of Connecticut

ON 7 MARCH 2019, PHILOSOPHER PAUL BLOOMFIELD DELIVERED A TALK titled “The Philosophy of Courage: Scope, Epistemology, and Moral Psychology” to an audience of students and faculty at the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California.¹ He was invited to deliver his lecture by Professor Bradley J. Strawser, who teaches ethics in the Defense Analysis department at NPS.

BRADLEY STRAWSER: Let me introduce Paul Bloomfield, a moral philosopher who works in the discipline of moral analytic philosophy metaethics. He writes on the topics of moral realism, virtue, and the question, “Why be moral?”² These issues involve trying to understand what counts as a well-lived or a happy life, and what the proper role of morality is in such a life.

PAUL BLOOMFIELD: Good afternoon. It’s a great honor to be here. It’s a daunting task to talk to all of you about courage. I’m a philosopher and I’ve never been in the military, so what can a philosopher teach a warfighter about courage? I hope to situate the virtue of courage within a wider theory and thus enable you to think more broadly and, I hope, more rigorously about it. Keep in mind that this talk is only an overview of the topic; most of what I say deserves more treatment than I can give it here.

Courage is important to my work in moral philosophy because I study virtue theory. The virtues are a subset of personality traits, a subset over which we have some long-term voluntary control. We can learn to be more virtuous in a variety of ways. I’ll say more about that later when I talk about epistemology.

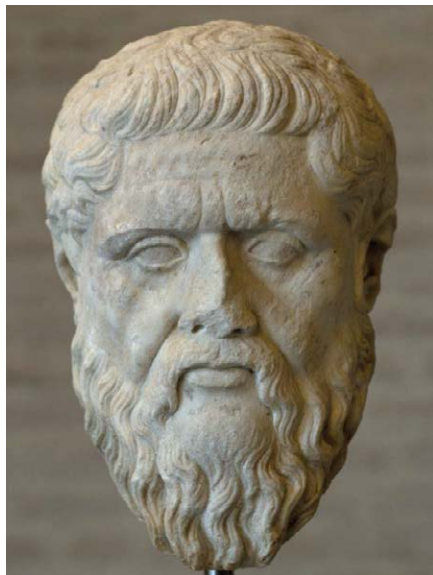
There is a set of virtues called the cardinal virtues. The word *cardinal* comes from the Latin word *cardo*, which translates as “hinge” or “axis,” so the cardinal virtues are those virtues upon which a good life is supposed to depend. Traditionally, the cardinal virtues are temperance, justice, wisdom, and courage. From a psychological point of view, we can think of these virtues as expert systems or managerial faculties that are supposed to help us deal with problems that are endemic to the human condition. For example, temperance is the system by which we are supposed to manage our emotions, passions, desires, and appetites: in other

Courage, Anxiety, and Despair: Watching the Battle, by James Sant, c. 1850.



Paul Bloomfield

Courage helps us to handle, as excellently as possible, the dangerous things in the world.



Silanion's Head of Plato, Roman copy.

words, how we become properly self-regulated. Justice, according to the Greek understanding of the term, is supposed to help us manage our social relations. In my view, wisdom, which I'll be saying a bit more about later, is the foundational virtue, because it is necessary for all the other virtues but isn't a sufficient substitute, by itself, for any of them. Wisdom is the trait by which we figure out what's of value in the world—the means by which we distinguish what's good and what's bad. Wisdom helps us set goals and determine our objectives; it helps us make plans and execute them, and helps us solve practical problems that arise as we are going about our lives.

Courage is the character trait that allows us to manage fear and face danger well. We know we're mortal creatures; we know what pain is, we know what illness is, and these experiences are naturally fearful for us. The characteristic of these fearful situations is that they present danger: a possibility of physical or psychological harm. Notice that the natural fearful responses to danger—fears themselves—can become dangerous because they can interfere with our ability to deal with external threats well. Courage helps us to handle, as excellently as possible, the dangerous things in the world and to manage our fears so that they do not become dangerous to us. So that's a broad and general sketch of virtue theory.

The Scope of Courage

Let's now turn to the question of the scope of courage, or the range of circumstances in which it may manifest. A natural place to begin is with etymology. The Greek word that we translate as "courage" is *andreia*, though a more literal translation of it is "manliness." The Greeks assumed that men were virtuous and courageous and women were timid and weak. There's an obviously misogynistic streak in this that has generated a strong and justified feminist critique. It should be noted that the Greeks were not unaware of the possibility that women could be courageous. Their literature contained examples of courageous women such as Antigone, who was willing to die to make sure that her slain brother got a proper burial; Electra, who sought to avenge her father's murder; and Alcestis, who offered herself in sacrifice to save her husband's life. In *The Republic*, Plato writes about female members of the ruling "guardian" class, so he conceived of women guardians—philosopher queens, I guess you could call them. But there was still an understanding among the ancient Greek writers that courage manifest in women was an unnatural thing, or at least paradoxical at some level. Nowadays, happily, that paradox has largely dissipated, at least in the West. After the Civil War, the US government gave Mary Edwards Walker the Medal of Honor for her work as a battlefield surgeon. More recently, Army Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester and Specialist Monica Brown received Silver Stars for their courageous actions in Iraq.³

I believe that these problems, caused by the association between courage and manliness, are indicative of a larger problem within our "common sense," or folk theories, of virtues. I'm skeptical of folk theories in general, not because they don't serve a purpose—they certainly do—but because they're not expert systems: they're "folk systems," so to speak. As an example, "the folk" get it wrong when they fail to distinguish between genuine courage on the one hand and mere "recklessness plus luck" on the other. But that's an important distinction. "The folk" very often contrast courage with cowardice, and I've even read some otherwise excellent philosophical work that contrasts courage with cowardice



Army Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester (pictured left) and Specialist Monica Brown (pictured right) received Silver Stars

without discussing recklessness at all, or how recklessness contrasts with courage. I'll say more about recklessness later on.

So if we can't really trust folk theory, then perhaps we should turn to philosophers for a better understanding of the scope of courage. Normally, this is a helpful move, but in this case, unfortunately, there's some disagreement. Aristotle claimed that the only place where courage ever manifests itself is on the battlefield, when people's lives are in danger. Aristotle knew this was a contentious claim when he wrote it because Plato was his teacher, and in his dialogue *Laches*, Plato describes Socrates as saying explicitly that a person can be courageous in a broad range of circumstances beyond the battlefield. For example, courage can be found among those caught on a ship far out to sea in a storm, and in people with serious illnesses. And so, you might wonder: If Plato and Aristotle are pointing in opposite directions about this question, what are we going to do? I think the answer is to change the question a little bit. I don't think that the right way to get at the scope of courage is by imagining hypothetical situations and asking whether courage can be found in them. It's better to talk about the character trait of being a courageous person, because I think Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates would have less disagreement about who is courageous and how courageous people are likely to behave wherever they happen to be.

To get a better idea of how courage works, the first distinction to make is between doing a courageous act and doing it courageously, or, more broadly, between performing a virtuous act and performing it virtuously. The adverbial form—the *way* an act is done—is the primary one here. In other words, it's possible to perform virtuous or courageous acts for the wrong reasons or in the wrong way, not the way a virtuous or courageous person would perform them, even if the acts appear to be the same. To do something *courageously* is to do it as a courageous person would. This is the only way that an action is going to have its full moral worth, so to speak. To become a courageous person, you have to do more than simply perform courageous acts: you have to perform them *courageously*. But you also have to do them reliably. It's not as if performing one act courageously makes you a courageous person. As Aristotle said, one swallow doesn't make a summer. So, courage comes in degrees, not simply because some acts require more courage than others, but also because some people are more reliably courageous in their lives than are others.

There does seem to be a range of circumstances under which one might show courage in general. On the battlefield, there very well might be people who are

To do something courageously is to do it as a courageous person would.



Plato and Aristotle, or Philosophy. Marble panel by Luca della Robbia, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo.



A firefighter heads off to fight the Soberanes Fire in California, 2016.

Even if Aristotle tried to distinguish virtues from skills in subtle ways, he acknowledged that the virtues were very similar to skills.

able to get out of the trench and charge towards the enemy despite being terrified by the incoming artillery or gunfire. We expect that the fully courageous person would be courageous across the entire range of battlefield circumstances. But if we agree that courage can also manifest in non-battlefield circumstances, we can imagine people being courageous on the battlefield but not in other areas of their life. The easiest way to understand this is to examine the scope of cowardice: it seems apparent that a genuine coward can be cowardly in a variety of circumstances, and where the possibility of vice arises, so does the possibility of virtue. We can imagine people who are courageous on the battlefield but who are afraid of public speaking, or going to the hospital, or confronting their parents, or some common circumstance like that. But we can also imagine a form of courage off the battlefield in someone like a firefighter, who runs into burning buildings to save people, and who does his job very well, and yet who is cowardly in other areas of his life. If we ask ourselves how courageous we think this firefighter is, we would say that he is clearly courageous at some level, but on another level he's not nearly as courageous as he could be. So, again, courageous acts come in a variety of strengths, so to speak, and being a courageous person also comes in degrees: we can be more or less courageous under different circumstances.

The flip side of the idea that virtue manifests itself in degrees is that nobody is perfectly virtuous, and the same is true for courage: nobody is perfectly courageous. It's important to appreciate that the virtues are ideals, states to which we can aspire. We're fallible mortal creatures and we all make mistakes. We also operate under conditions of incomplete knowledge. So it's not possible for anyone to always do the right thing, or always perform the action that would reflect perfect virtue or perfect courage. No one's perfect, but we can be more or less courageous.

The Epistemology of Courage

Moving on, let's now talk about the epistemology of courage. Epistemology is the area of philosophy that deals with knowledge and the study of knowledge. The ancient Greeks agreed that, at the very least, the virtues were much like skills. In fact, everyone except Aristotle thought that the virtues were literal skills in a prosaic sense, in the same way that being a cobbler or a mathematician or a pianist are skills that can be learned. And even if Aristotle tried to distinguish virtues from skills in subtle ways, he acknowledged that the virtues were very similar to skills and that they could be learned in the same way that skills were learned. So, the epistemology of virtue, how virtuous people know what to do, is the epistemology of skills per se. This idea allows a virtue theorist like me to appeal to a great deal of the existing literature in the psychology and epistemology of skills and skill acquisition in general. This makes my job a little easier.

Now, I'm sure most of you in the military have a great appreciation for how, at some level, a great deal of courage can be acquired by rote training, doing the same thing over and over and over. You study, you reflect on your mistakes, and you go back and practice some more, until you reach the point where your trained reactions become "second nature" (a term of Aristotle's) and you do them automatically. Now, that kind of training is not going to be sufficient to account for all forms of courage, but it's going to provide a good foundation for courage. As to what's required for full courage beyond that level, I think the answer will be different for commanders and subordinates. Today I want to talk about

commanders, the people who make decisions, rather than the people who are following orders. The epistemic difference is that decision makers are required to assess risks.

There is a surprising similarity between the epistemic task that courageous people face when they're in dangerous situations and what insurance actuaries do when they're figuring out tables of probability and risk. I don't know enough about actuarial science to go into the specifics of cost-benefit analysis or the Bayesian probability theories that inform these sorts of assessments, but I'm sure they're done in a formal and precise way. I'm also sure that the mental processes of risk assessment become automatized to some degree for genuinely courageous commanders, at least in less-than-dire circumstances. Truly dire circumstances may require thought and reflection, if that's possible and one isn't just trying to do the best one can in the middle of a bad situation.

Understanding risk requires assessment of three different things: the circumstances you find yourself in, the different people who are involved, and the goals and objectives of the various actors. Stepping back, there are four different kinds of situations that require virtuous behavior: situations requiring offense, situations requiring defense, situations of reconnaissance, and, finally, rescue situations.

Offense involves direct frontal assaults and patrols that require the immediate execution of short-term tactics; on the larger scale, there will be strategic goals to meet. Being on the offense can involve deception or setting traps for the enemy, luring them into disadvantageous positions or mounting sneak attacks: we feint left but we move right, we feign retreat to move the enemy forward and then attack with a reserve that was held in the back. My favorite example of this is from Robert Rogers, a major in the Continental Army during the French and Indian War. In the appendix of David Hackworth's book, *About Face*, he gives the list of Roger's "Standing Orders." My favorite one for offense is "If somebody is trailing you, make a circle, come back on to your own tracks, and ambush the folk that aim to ambush you."⁴ I don't need to say any more to you about offense, as this is your bailiwick more than mine.

There are also risks in being on defense, of course, and strategies for managing them. Defense is often about hunkering down and absorbing an offense. A classic non-military example is Muhammad Ali's "rope-a-dope" strategy, which he used against George Foreman in their 1974 championship boxing match. Ali intentionally taunted Foreman to make him angry. When Foreman started throwing punches, Ali just hunkered down against the ropes and took the blows until Foreman wore himself out, at which point Ali went on the offensive. In the end,

Mohammed Ali lifts his arms in triumph





Protestors being subdued during the Birmingham Campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, May 1963.

Foreman was too tired to defend himself adequately and lost the fight. That's often the way defense works: you stay on defense until you have an opportunity to move to offense.

I think the more interesting cases of courage while on the defense involve knowing when *not fighting at all* is the right thing to do. There are even times when the right thing to do, the courageous thing to do, is to retreat. That doesn't mean to just turn tail and run, but to retreat because it's the wisest, most rational option in the circumstances. Retreating is something one can do courageously—or cowardly or recklessly. In *Symposium*, Plato recounts the Athenian retreat at the battle of Delium, where Socrates fought as a soldier under General Laches. According to this account, anyone could tell, even from a distance, that Socrates was a man who would resist an attack with considerable determination, and that's why he and many of the Athenians got out of there safely. The enemy generally would rather not take on someone who can remain calm during combat; they prefer to go after people who are in headlong flight.

I think the more interesting cases of courage while on the defense involve knowing when *not fighting at all* is the right thing to do.

I sensed a little surprise among you in the audience when I said that courage can be expressed in retreat. But I think a little reflection will show you that sometimes the courageous thing to do can be even worse in some ways than retreating: it can be courageous, under certain circumstances, to surrender. It is not hard to imagine a situation in which some people have to surrender to cause a diversion, or to let other people escape, or something like that. It's not going to happen often, but it seems perfectly possible. Falling on one's sword can be an act of courage. And sometimes the courageous thing can be to not fight or resist at all. It is a commonplace to say that "discretion is the better part of valor." This means that you choose your time to fight; you don't just fight when your enemy wants to fight.

I don't mean to suggest, by the way, that the distinction between offense and defense is absolutely obvious and clear in all circumstances. For instance, the people who were fighting for civil rights in the 1960s were engaged in civil disobedience, which was non-violent and which definitely had defensive aspects, but they were nevertheless being disobedient and breaking laws and trying to cause a commotion. That is a sort of offense.

Turning to reconnaissance, I have the least to say about it with regard to risk assessment. I'll just mention two more of Robert Rogers's standing orders regarding reconnaissance, based on good common sense: "Don't sit down to eat without posting sentries," and, "No matter whether we travel in big parties or little ones, each party has to keep a scout 20 yards ahead, 20 yards on each flank, and 20 yards in the rear so the main body can't be surprised and wiped out."⁵

There is something particularly noble about courage in rescue, because the objectives are purely humanitarian.

There is also courage to be found in rescue operations. I think there is something particularly noble about courage in rescue, because the objectives are purely humanitarian and not operational. And there are certainly a variety of skills that are going to be important for epistemically assessing situations. People who are trained to be military professionals will likely carry out some rescue operations, but not all rescuers are soldiers or warfighters at all. They might be battlefield surgeons like Mary Edwards Walker, or medics, or stretcher bearers—people who aren't fighters but still have to figure out the safest way to carry out a dangerous operation on behalf of someone else.

As I've outlined, there are four typical kinds of situations that require a risk assessment, though of course these are likely not exhaustive. In any case, those same sorts of assessment also require people to be assessed: are the people you're fighting with experienced fighters or are they green? Are they exhausted from spending a long time on the front or are they fresh from weekend R&R? You want to assess your enemies as well: are they veterans or are they new to fighting? Of course, you always hope you're going to be fighting with well-fed veterans against hungry green troops, but it doesn't always work out that way.

The most difficult kind of assessment, I think, is the self-assessment that people have to engage in to try to understand what they themselves are capable of. These sorts of self-assessment are really tricky, if you think about it. We would never in a million years allow a judge to try his or her own case nor even one in which he or she had some indirect personal stake. Why? Because the judge would be too biased towards an outcome favorable to the judge's interests to have any kind of objectivity or credibility. But self-knowledge of all forms requires exactly that: you have to be a judge of yourself, make an assessment of yourself. It's hard for us to see ourselves in an objective way and there are all sorts of psychological traps that human beings

fall into when they make judgments about their own abilities, such as the Dunning-Kruger effect, confirmation bias, self-serving bias, and motivated reasoning.

There's even an interesting set of questions involving being courageous and honestly assessing your own abilities, and how doing so is related to self-deception. In general, we regard self-deception as a bad thing that we should try to avoid, as generally we are successful when we believe the truth and disbelieve what is false. In fact, self-deception might actually be beneficial in genuinely dire circumstances. We have an ability to deceive ourselves about ourselves, and it is no accident that this ability was naturally selected for through evolution. When the odds are so thoroughly stacked against us that a truly objective assessment of the likelihood of success or survival would lead to at least a little despondency, nature allows us to trick ourselves into redoubling our efforts, because max-



Mary Edwards Walker, the only woman appointed to the level of assistant surgeon during the Civil War

imum effectiveness is the only hope for success. A person in a dangerous situation who becomes hopeless is already doomed. I think the function of self-deception is about preserving hope even in extreme, hopeless circumstances because that's the only chance for survival. Warfighters are going to face such circumstances far more frequently than civilians who are not themselves in war zones. So, oddly, on the one hand, there will be situations in which making an objective and accurate assessment of what one can do and what one can't do is crucial—obviously, no one wants to throw their life away. On the other hand, there might be quite different circumstances in which one is better off having a somewhat deluded belief in one's own abilities, because then at least one will not fail for lack of trying.

There's a final aspect of these assessments, which involves knowing the value of things in a way that appeals back to wisdom. As I said at the start of my talk, practical rationality or practical wisdom, *phronesis* in the Greek, is supposed to tell us what's of value in the world, and I hope that we can all agree that courageous people know what is worth dying for and what is not worth dying for. We have to have a sense of what is genuinely, objectively of value: which objectives are worth fighting for and which are not. Is the hill important enough to justify the potential casualties or is it not? The understanding of value that we get from wisdom is important to courageous people who need to know which goals to pursue and which ones to avoid. And, as prosaic as this idea may be, it is one that will be useful for us below.

The Moral Psychology of Courage

Moving on to the area of moral psychology, the first question concerns how courageous people manage their fears. There are different theories about this. One theory says that courageous people feel fear just like everyone else does, but they're very good at compartmentalizing, ignoring, or suppressing their fear. Aristotle said that courageous people have trained their emotions—their fears—to serve as a sort of risk meter: their level of fear is always going to be proportional to the risks that they're facing. In other words, they don't simply feel fear in response to danger as a normal or average person would, but measure their fear against the actual—not merely perceived—danger. The Stoics, in contrast, assumed that the truly courageous person would be fearless, because they thought that the only intrinsically valuable things in the world were the virtues and, therefore, the only intrinsically bad things were the vices. So, according to these Stoic values, death, injury, and illness are not to be feared because they aren't inherently vicious, bad, or evil.

This isn't to say that all courageous people manage their fears in the same way, and there's no reason to assume they do. An interesting theory of how courageous people manage their fears comes from Antony Duff, a philosopher at the University of Stirling, who argued in 1987 that courageous people transform their fear into something like resignation.⁶ Their fear becomes their resolve. It's not that they stop thinking that death is a bad thing, the way the Stoics did, but rather, they accept what they see to be their fate and through accepting it are not afraid of it.

Master Sergeant Jack Speed, who served under Colonel David Hackworth in Korea, is quoted as saying:

What made a guy right for the Raiders? You had to be someone who just didn't give a shit. It isn't a big deal to die, you know—"Live with honor, die with dignity," that was the Raider's slogan. See, Hackworth had pride in people. And for a twenty-year-old man to be able to make a person want to fight and die and be *happy* about it—shit, we were happy to die for our country. That's the kind of spirit we had in the Raiders.⁷

I think there's something undeniably commendable about this attitude, and yet, I think it falls short of courage because I don't think that courageous people are happy to die regardless of what the cause is. It's not that courageous people are going to hesitate over their own deaths if dying is necessary and worth it, in the circumstances, but they're not going to die happily, either. Why? Well, interestingly, as Speed says, "Live with honor, die with dignity." If we take the current Kantian view of dignity, it involves understanding a person's, or one's own, inestimable worth. And so it seems that people who are happy to die wouldn't be valuing themselves properly or appreciating the loss they're experiencing by their own death. I think that, at some level, Speed's attitude is self-disrespecting. In contrast, a student of mine from the Coast Guard suggested that Speed might actually have been a very fearful person and that this sort of language might have been a way to suppress his own fear through bravado. That's possible, too, although, if I had to choose between someone who was suppressing his own fear with bravado and someone who was really courageous, of course I'd much rather have the courageous person next to me.

Courage is the mean between cowardice and recklessness.

Another important facet of the moral psychology of courage comes from Aristotle, who famously argued that the virtues are a mean between two extremes. So, temperance is the mean between gluttony and abstinence and justice is the mean between arrogance and servility. Within such a view, courage is the mean between cowardice and recklessness. We often contrast courage with cowardice, and we can characterize cowards as people whose fear and lack of confidence keeps them from engaging well with danger, but rather makes them run away or simply surrender. On the other hand, people who are reckless are often overconfident and underestimate danger. In this understanding, courage involves the managing of fear and the possession of proper confidence, and this fits well with what we have discussed so far. Of course, there are many ways to be cowardly and reckless. One form of recklessness involves making careless assessments of the situation or jumping to a conclusion, or rashly leaping without first looking. We

can be reckless with our values as well and engage in vicious behavior, which is what we'll discuss in our final topic.

We can finish by broaching the large and complicated issues concerning whether unjust people can be courageous. Common sense—the folk theory—seems to suggest that, yes, it's possible for unjust people to be courageous. We've heard stories of the daring cat burglar and the bold highwayman. There are criminals everywhere who behave in seemingly courageous ways in pursuit of whatever it is they're after, and there are genuinely evil people who can perform what appear to be courageous acts. But I have reason to think that the folk are wrong about this, and that you can't be both unjust *and* courageous.

First, as discussed above, I hope we all agree that courageous people have to know what is and what is not worth dying for. If that's true, then, at some level, courageous people have to have good judgment. If so, then good judgment is necessary for courage. What, then, should we think about those people who fight in an army that's waging an unjust war? In this case, there's a difference between conscripts and volunteers, so for now I'll talk only about volunteers.

Eighteen million people were members of the Wehrmacht, the German armed forces, between 1935 and 1945. On the one hand, it seems highly unlikely that every single one of them was evil and so, at some level, I think we have to accept the fact that if we were born in Germany in 1920 and had blond hair and blue eyes, we probably would have ended up fighting in Hitler's army during World War II. That makes it seem as if the judgment of the actual Nazi soldiers might not have been so bad. On the other hand, it seems that they couldn't have had good judgment to fight for that sort of army. Were Hitler's glory and the Aryan race really worth dying for? Most people who fight for a particular cause think their cause is just. But if, in fact, they're wrong and their cause is unjust, especially if they are egregiously wrong and the cause is reprehensibly unjust, this shows that those people have bad judgment. So I think that there's some justification for thinking that people who are fighting in unjust wars are demonstrating their bad judgment. And if we agree that courage requires good judgment, that shows that unjust people can't be courageous.

What about those Nazis who seemingly behaved in all sorts of courageous ways? Remember the distinction I suggested toward the start between performing courageous acts and performing them courageously? Now this distinction becomes a very important one. Perhaps the Nazi soldier rescues a comrade—the kind of rescue that is, in a way, the lifeblood of battlefield courage. That rescue can

be a genuinely courageous act performed courageously for the right reasons, but notice that even an action like that is set within the broader context of a war motivated, as I argued, by the sort of bad judgment found in people who are fighting for an unjust cause. Remember, courage is a notion of degree—it's not black-or-white, on-or-off—and people can be more or less courageous. Some Nazis probably could be courageous to a degree, but I would say that, to the degree that people are fighting for causes that don't deserve defense, those people are being reckless rather than courageous. There's more to say on that point, but I'll end there and we can take some questions.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Considering what you said about judgment being a prerequisite of courage, what can you say about the pilot who is delivering a retaliatory nuclear strike? Is he courageous?

BLOOMFIELD: It depends on whether we're talking about the commander of the mission or the person who is following orders. I don't feel comfortable talking about whether or when it's appropriate for subordinates to question the orders they're given, because I don't know enough about the military and its particular ethos to have an informed opinion. If it's an obvious situation like the My Lai massacre or Abu Ghraib, then raising questions is the right thing to do, but I don't think that the pilot of the plane or the bombardier is in a position to question the order to drop a particular bomb.⁸ The responsibility falls completely on the shoulders of the commander who, in this case, I suppose, would be the president of the United States. And frankly, while that sort of decision may require courage, it's courage in an attenuated sense, because the actual dangers that the president might face as a result of this decision are purely social and political, and perhaps psychological, but they are not physical.

QUESTION: What can you say about the relationship of unknown factors to risk assessment? How would you interpret situations with unknown circumstances or even multiple circumstances? Would these situations fall under the category of reconnaissance, as you mentioned earlier?

BLOOMFIELD: This idea came up briefly earlier, when I was discussing why no one can be perfectly courageous and mentioned how we all frequently act under incomplete information. When you're assessing risk, you can't know everything, so you have to make the best judgment possible, given the circumstances you're in and the information you have. My understanding about battle plans is that they

are always wonderful until the enemy is encountered, at which point the plans almost always go out the window. The best explanation for this suggests that it is the result of all of these unknown, unforeseen factors that can come into play on the battlefield. There's a sense in which courageous action requires a kind of spontaneous or extemporaneous ability to assess circumstances, to have your skills honed so that, to the greatest degree possible, you can act on second nature. That's about all I can say.

QUESTION: Do certain cultures manifest their courage differently? How does your theory help me to understand, for example, my Chinese counterpart's motivations for courageous acts?

All of the virtues have a particular logos or internal logic, a fundamental set of principles that guide the skill.

BLOOMFIELD: There might be very different ways for courage to express itself. For example, I don't think that the courage of the medieval Japanese samurai will be the same as the courage of the contemporary inner-city emergency-room nurse. Nevertheless, I think that there are certain principles that cover all acts of courage. The skill of being courageous has to have what the Greeks called *logos*: all of the virtues have a particular logos or internal logic, a fundamental set of principles that guide the skill. I would expect there to be a number of overlaps between courage as an American understands it and courage as your counterpart in China understands it. Think of the iconic photograph taken during the Tiananmen Square uprising, of a single man holding plastic bags and standing before a line of tanks. It is not at all hard to see this as courageous. Or, as a hypothetical, if someone abandons their comrades when the danger is high or the fear is great, then that person is not courageous by anybody's measure. Might there be particular ways in which someone in Asia manifests their courage differently from someone in the West? I think that's possible and even likely, but as long as the acts of courage fall under this umbrella of principles, then I don't see a problem for the theory.

QUESTION: My question involves this idea of uncertainty. It seems to be an epistemic problem: at what point do you know that you're being courageous rather than reckless? Without enough information, you can almost never know whether an action is, in fact, courageous.

BLOOMFIELD: Immanuel Kant famously said that we can't ever know with certainty what anybody's motivations are, and that includes our own. At least, we can't know for certain. I think that there's plenty of evidence for this. Nevertheless, at some level, our motivations are a fact even if our own introspective understanding of them is fallible. One of the reasons that common sense doesn't distinguish courage on the one hand from "recklessness plus luck" on the other is because we don't really know what people's motivations are when they're carrying out an action. We can't know for certain whether they know exactly what they're doing, or they're being overconfident, or they're negligent with regards to assessing the risks, or they're even being reckless and just rushing headlong in without thinking.

I think reliability might be one indication of being genuinely courageous, as opposed to being just reckless and lucky, because luck isn't reliable in the way that courage is. It's hard for us to be sure of what our own motivations might have been in a particular circumstance, even if we step back and examine our thoughts and behavior over a series of actions and make a general inference from

all of them. But despite the difficulty of this, if we could reflect accurately over a range of cases in which we behaved in a way that appears courageous, it would probably give us as good a sense of ourselves as we can have. Judging other people's intentions is going to be even harder. It's my understanding that when medals of valor are passed out, there's often a disconnect between the commendation that the commander reads out loud and what the troops say among themselves about what really happened. That disconnect could mean that the action being commemorated was a bit reckless and lucky. If there's no disconnect between the official story and the perception of the troops, then maybe the person receiving the medal acted out of genuine courage.

QUESTION: In 2017, Colin Kaepernick was a runner-up for *Time* Magazine's Person of the Year and won other awards for being courageous.⁹ This comes in contrast to the reality that certain Americans are facing actual war. How do we reconcile those two perceptions of courage?

BLOOMFIELD: I haven't discussed the traditional distinctions regarding physical, moral, and intellectual courage because I'm a bit skeptical about them. I don't see moral courage going one way and physical courage going another way. I try to understand courage as what is required to manage circumstances that involve danger, and I understand danger as the possibility of either psychological or physical harm. When Colin Kaepernick first got down on his knee, it didn't take a lot of courage, in my view. It was when he continued his protest despite the intense backlash against him personally that he struck me as being courageous. But his risks were professional and social, and while not insubstantial, they do not seem to measure up to the physical risks taken on by warfighters.

STRAWSER: Is the sort of public condemnation that Kaepernick faced a kind of danger, in the sense of requiring courage to face it?

BLOOMFIELD: Being ostracized, being rejected, can be a psychological danger, although it's not typically a physical danger. I think we can see that the kind of harm



Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers kneels during the national anthem to protest the killing of black Americans by police.

Kaepernick has suffered makes his act courageous because there was, in fact, personal risk in doing what he did.

I haven't encountered anything from others but respect for the military and their courage. Even if people are not in favor of the decisions that politicians make when they send the military to fight, I don't think there's anything but admiration for the courage of the soldiers who are actually facing the danger. It seems to me that the disrespect veterans were shown by some civilians upon returning from the Vietnam War ended once the soldiers' plight gained publicity from movies like *First Blood* and *Born on the Fourth of July*.¹⁰

QUESTION: You talked about practice and training as a way to become more courageous, and that a large part of courage is learned through skills. In my viewpoint, that kind of training is more about acclimating to tolerance. Training can help you adjust your tolerance for risk, but can you become courageous through training if you're not

courageous from the start? Is there a certain intrinsic trait that a truly courageous person has?

BLOOMFIELD: One thing I didn't mention when I was talking about degrees of courage is the difference between the courage of answering a call to duty and the courage that's above and beyond the call of duty: that's the courage of heroes. I do think there are people who are prodigies of this sort of courage; I think that's true of all the virtues and skills. Not everyone is capable of achieving the same levels of what I would call skill mastery or expertise in demonstrating courage. There are people who do bring some innate talent to the circumstances they find themselves in, but I believe that the basic levels of courage—the call-of-duty kind—can be learned well enough through training. The heroic kind of courage might be autodidactic: on some level, I think people have to teach themselves that kind of expertise.

I think we all could be more courageous than we currently are, and that we can train ourselves in a variety of ways to learn those lessons.

QUESTION: In other words, you can train people to do courageous acts, but perhaps you can't train them to be courageous people?

BLOOMFIELD: Aristotle says that, as beginners, we learn certain things by imitating. You learn to be a builder by working alongside a skilled builder, you learn to be a lyre player by playing the lyre the way you've heard others play it. In the same way, you get the basics of courage in basic training, in boot camp. That's where people learn to deal with their first panic responses. The early stages of developing a skill involve imitating the people who know what they're doing. Only after following them for a while can you really start to understand the rationale behind doing it that way instead of doing it some other way. That's how you move from being a beginner to actually having some possession of the skill itself. Further levels of advancement involve knowing how to apply the principles well to certain cases, and the highest levels involve throwing the rule book out the window because you know when to treat some particular circumstance as "an exception to the rule" and do something that you otherwise would never do. I think we all could be more courageous than we currently are, and that we can train ourselves in a variety of ways to learn those lessons, but I also think that we bring our personal constitutions, our innate abilities, to everything we do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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NOTES

- 1 This lecture was edited for length and clarity. Every effort was made to ensure that the meaning and intention of the participants were not altered in any way. The ideas and opinions of all participants are theirs alone and do not represent the official positions of the US Naval Postgraduate School, the US Department of Defense, the US government, or any other official entity.
- 2 "Metaethics is a branch of analytic philosophy that explores the status, foundations, and scope of moral values, properties, and words. Whereas the fields of applied ethics and normative theory focus on *what is moral*, metaethics focuses on *what morality itself is*." For more on this topic, see the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Metaethics": <https://www.iep.utm.edu/metaethi/>
- 3 Sara Wood, "Female Soldier receives Silver Star in Iraq," US Army, 2 February 2007: https://www.army.mil/article/1645/female_soldier_receives_silver_star_in_iraq; Micah E. Clare, "2nd Woman Since WWII Gets Silver Star," US Army, 21 March 2008: https://www.army.mil/article/8068/2nd_woman_since_wwii_gets_silver_star
- 4 David Hackworth and Julie Sherman, *About Face* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1989), 836.
- 5 Ibid., 835.
- 6 Antony Duff, "Aristotelian Courage," *Ratio* 19 (1987): 2–15.
- 7 Hackworth and Sherman, *About Face*, 187.
- 8 The My Lai massacre took place in 1968 during the Vietnam War. A company of US soldiers attacked the South Vietnamese village of My Lai and killed hundreds of men, women, and children. Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq was the site of appalling prisoner abuse at the hands of US military guards in the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.
- 9 During the 2016 American football season, star San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began protesting a number of questionable deaths of black Americans at the hands of police officers, first by sitting and then by taking one knee during the playing of the national anthem at the beginning of football games. He subsequently became a free agent, but, despite an outstanding record, has not been invited to join a team since the 2016 season. He has also been the target of public condemnation in the traditional media and violently worded threats on social media.
- 10 *First Blood*, directed by Ted Kotcheff (El Cajon, Calif., Elcajo Productions: 1982); and *Born on the Fourth of July*, directed by Oliver Stone (Los Angeles, Ixtlan: 1989).

The Moving Image

Hotel Mumbai

Reviewed by CPT Yuri Sepp, US Marine Corps

THE VICIOUS TERRORIST ATTACKS THAT BEGAN ON the night of 26 November 2008 in the Indian coastal city of Mumbai have been called “India’s 9/11.” The shooting and bombings that killed 173 people over a period of four days, including nine of the ten attackers, were meant to produce intense emotional reactions in those who experienced the assault; the recent film based on these events, *Hotel Mumbai* (2018), was meant to produce a similar reaction in its audiences.¹ *Hotel Mumbai* uses a familiar narrative arc of focusing on the human elements and a few dramatized personal stories within the larger tragedy rather than on tactical details.

Nevertheless, the film offers useful introductory lessons for anti-terrorism planning and official reaction to terror events. The Mumbai attacks were a prominent event in India's long experience with anti-government terrorism, and invite comparisons to the effects of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The film tries to convey the shock and horror of the events on a very individual, personal level, and in doing so perhaps unintentionally transmits the intended purpose of the terrorist organization that executed it, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). LeT had assailed Mumbai, India's finance and technology hub, with bombings in previous years, and planned the 2008 operation to not only escalate its mission to re-establish Muslim control over the disputed territory of Kashmir and undermine the government of India, but also to serve as a highly visible event that would increase LeT's notoriety and, by extension, its ability to recruit volunteers to the cause.

While the film's story centers on its titular namesake, the venerable landmark Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, the actual series of attacks that began on 11/26 were of a far larger scope. The 10 LeT terrorists began their operation from Karachi, Pakistan, and inserted by watercraft launched from a fishing vessel they hijacked off the Indian coast. Upon landing, they attacked a total of 12 separate locations of various sizes and functions over a four-day period. Victims were killed at a railway station, a hospital, a Jewish Chabad Lubavitch center called Nariman House (which was not secured until the third day of the attack), the Leopold Café, which was popular with foreign tourists, the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, and the Oberoi Trident Hotel. To sow further confusion, the attackers also planted timed bombs in two taxis so they would detonate randomly, with no specific target in mind. Of all these locations, only the railway station, the café, and the Taj Hotel feature prominently in the film, while the rest are merely alluded to or go unmentioned.

The overall attack plan was deliberately incoherent and unpredictable, which greatly hampered the Mumbai police's response.

The attacker's movements were very carefully rehearsed, and they had studied blueprints for at least four of their targets: the two hotels, the railway station, and the Nariman House. The overall attack plan was deliberately incoherent and unpredictable, which greatly hampered the Mumbai police's response and resulted in greater peril for the victims. For example, the attackers pretended to take hostages in both the Taj Hotel and the Nariman House, occasionally threw grenades, used IEDs, and set fires to confuse and obstruct security personnel. There is no indication that any of the attackers expected to survive (although one was successfully arrested), nor was there any evidence that the hostage-taking was anything other than a delay tactic to allow the operation to last as long as possible; most of the hostages were executed by the terrorists before they could be rescued.

Police patrol outside the Leopold Cafe, one of a number of targets in the terrorist attack.





A scene from the movie, *Hotel Mumbai*

The film's detailed introductions of various victims as characters come at the sacrifice of details about the attack, leaving little time to describe the tactical background of the terrorists' initial movements. But the cinematically rushed and undramatic entry of the attackers into Mumbai at night via an inflatable boat becomes important in its subtlety. The short sequences featuring the teams of terrorists moving about a dense city while evading and even ambushing police highlights the confusion and lack of information inherent in reacting to such attacks, as well as the degree of rehearsal and planning that had preceded the operation. Despite leaving out many details, the film adequately conveys the coordinated nature of the attack, the careful process that went into selecting the perpetrators and conditioning them in fanaticism, and the fact that the ten terrorists had a clear objective: to cause as much chaos, confusion, and death as possible before they themselves were killed.

The cinematically rushed and undramatic entry of the attackers into Mumbai at night via an inflatable boat becomes important in its subtlety.

The film's most important lesson from a counterterrorism perspective is the role that chaos plays in these scenarios and how terrorists rely on it to magnify both the short- and long-term effects of an attack. The film's most glaring omission is the lack of a precise timeline. The screenplay leaves the impression that the events of 11/26 resolved themselves in a single 24-hour period. In reality, order in the city was not restored for four days while the ten LeT terrorists were hunted down, and save for one, shot to death. This conceptualization of all terrorist attacks as sudden but short-lived traumas like 9/11 can create false impressions about the typical duration of such events. In reality, security forces need to be able to handle multiple-day standoffs while also engaging with a traumatized civilian populace that can become restive if an attack is not quickly quelled.

Despite its temporal shortcomings, *Hotel Mumbai* manages to emphasize the slowness of India's national-level counterterrorism response in 2008, and the struggles of a local police force that was clearly overwhelmed by unfolding events. Viewers see authorities struggle to communicate via landline and shouts

while the terrorists use cell phones to receive live international news updates about the attack from their handlers in Pakistan. The Mumbai police, wielding old disused revolvers and vintage SKS rifles, improvise their responses as they clash with highly trained, hand-picked men who are following detailed, well-rehearsed plans and carrying fragmentation grenades, plastic-explosive IEDs, and AK-47s and semi-automatic pistols with hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

The Mumbai police, wielding old disused revolvers and vintage SKS rifles, improvise their responses as they clash with highly trained, hand-picked men.

Trapped between the two opponents, hotel staff struggle to control their guests, who repeatedly fail to shelter in place (the film's second-most-valuable lesson after the role of chaos) and regularly make things worse for everyone except the terrorists. In one scene, early in the attack, two guests who are trapped in a ground-floor restaurant in the Taj Hotel communicate via cell phone with a nanny who is caring for their infant child on a higher floor. The parents' efforts to reunite with their infant result in more confusion and separation, and both parents and another guest are eventually captured by the terrorists. The nanny spends most of the film hiding with the infant and they both survive the attack.

Hotel Mumbai's emphasis on drama over documentary necessarily leaves out much of the background to the attack, such as the role of India-Pakistan relations in the rise of Islamist extremism, the long history of LeT's prior terrorist attacks in India, and the political fallout following the attack. The dramatization of various families' stories and that of a former Soviet Spetznaz officer who is

Workers clean the driveway leading to the Trident hotel in Mumbai, India, after the terror attacks.





Police personnel watch the Taj Mahal Hotel, set ablaze by terrorists, in Mumbai, India, on 27 November 2008.

caught up in the fighting, alongside jarring scenes of violence, takes up most of the screen time. But *Hotel Mumbai* still serves as a visceral and emotional conversation-starter about terrorism as a tool for political and social manipulation, and it is a timely and relevant introduction to the deeper challenges of counterterrorism in the modern era. The film's 2018 release is perhaps more relevant than the film's producers planned, given that one of the likely ringleaders of the attack, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhavi, won his release from a Pakistani prison in 2015; LeT remains an active terrorist group; and India's recent abrogation of Kashmir's special status has inflamed tensions with Pakistan. The persistent threat of global terrorism ensures that films like *Hotel Mumbai* can serve not only as a retelling of a specific terrorist action, but also as a warning of the likelihood of similar attacks in the future. The government of India established a centralized counterterrorism law enforcement agency called the National Investigation Agency in the wake of the 2008 attack and committed itself to upgrading the weapons and tools available to law enforcement. The western Indian state of Maharashtra, in which Mumbai is located, went further and established its own special counterterrorism security force, called "Force One," to serve as both a quick-reaction force and a special security detail for politicians. Final judgment on the effects of, and reactions to, the Mumbai attacks, however, ultimately lies in the eye of the beholder and is sure to vary from person to person and from analyst to operator. Opinions on the potency of *Hotel Mumbai* as a film must be similarly subjective.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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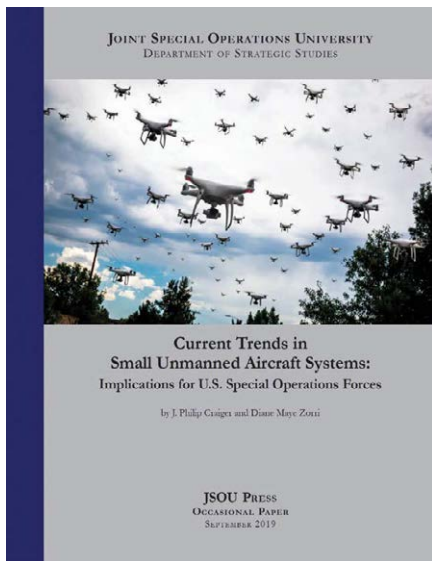
NOTES

- 1 *Hotel Mumbai*, directed by Anthony Maras (Santa Monica, Calif., Thunder Road Pictures: 2018).

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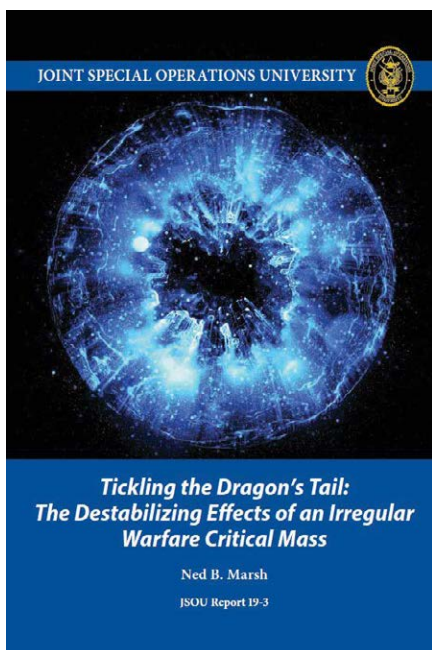
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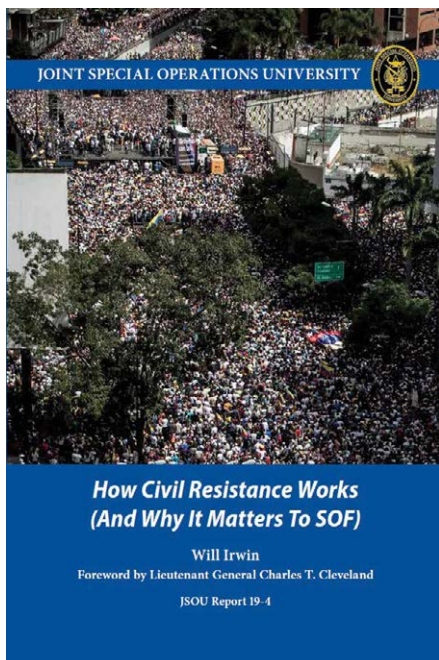
Current Trends in Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems: Implications for U.S. Special Operations Forces by J. Philip Craiger and Diane Maye Zorri

In this new occasional paper, Dr. J. Philip Craiger and Dr. Diane Maye Zorri explore current trends in small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) technology and its applications to Special Operations Forces (SOF). The paper begins with an overview of the definition and classification of sUAS, their major applications, and characteristics. The authors then present sUAS military applications, threats, current/future threat scenarios, and counter-sUAS capabilities and technology. The authors conclude with a look at the five-year trends in sUAS, including cyber-enabled counter-sUAS. Setting the stage in their introduction, the authors state, “As armed forces around the world continue to invest in research and development of sUAS technologies, there will be tremendous potential to revolutionize warfare, particularly in the context of special operations.”



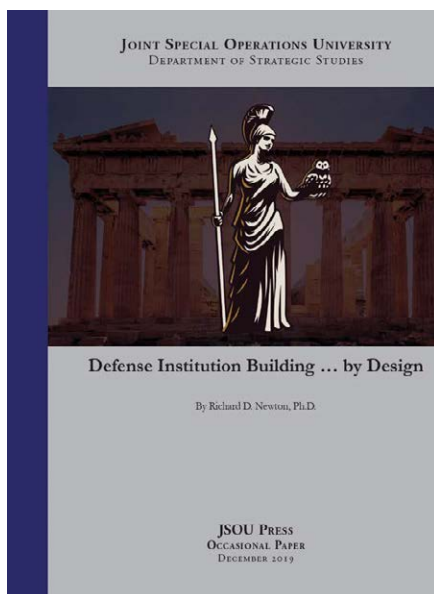
Tickling the Dragon's Tail: The Destabilizing Effects of an Irregular Warfare Critical Mass by Ned B. Marsh

Lieutenant Colonel Ned Marsh wrote this monograph while attending the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies. He proposes that, over time, a metaphorical critical mass constructed of global irregular warfare (IW) actors, state and non-state, has developed. The core is now active and exists within an enabling contemporary environmental structure. State warfare hegemony has decreased conventional competition and increased asymmetrical strategies. The result of this has been the emergence of IW as a prominent strategy and a self-propagating chain reaction of IW activity. This activity is releasing increasingly dangerous levels of destabilizing effects. This monograph reviews IW theory and history, and describes the contemporary operational paradigm. It analyzes the effect of cumulative IW activity and discusses prescriptive approaches to the problem. It concludes that, if stability is an objective, then counter-IW must be holistically undertaken with strategies to reduce conventional warfare competition.



How Civil Resistance Works (And Why It Matters To SOF) by Will Irwin with a foreword by Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland

Mr. Will Irwin reminds us in this extremely timely and well-written monograph that, as John F. Kennedy observed more than a half century ago, those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. Million-man protest marches in Hong Kong, riots and rebellion in Caracas, continued rumors of widespread discontent in Tehran, sabotage in the face of unspeakable brutality in North Korea, sectarian civil war in Syria, and the unrelenting assault on liberal democracy by the dictatorial regime in Moscow—the headlines of today have their seeds in the inherent fear of tyrants. It is that fear on which America must capitalize and be prepared to use to our advantage. These disturbances reveal the critical role that America's special warfare units play in the contemporary era of nation-state competition and conflict, for it is their own people that our enemies fear most. Will Irwin's monograph is a timely and important contribution to what will eventually become canon for the American Way of Irregular War and the basis for the professional military education of its uniformed and civilian irregular warfare practitioners.



Defense Institution Building...by Design by Richard D. Newton

In this occasional paper, Dr. Richard Newton presents the case that sustainable, strategic effects through Defense Institution Building (DIB) can be achieved through paradigmatic change among key military stakeholders and a willingness to engage in systemic reform. While Security Force Assistance, Foreign Internal Defense, and Joint/Combined Exchange Training have long been staples of Special Operations Forces engagement, they are often unable to achieve DIB objectives because they are not intended to achieve paradigm shifts and the consequent organizational transformation necessary to organically sustain the new capabilities. Overly recognizing this discrepancy is essential for improving DIB practices and augmenting allied and partner nations' contributions to collective defense. This paper recommends taking a design thinking approach for designing, developing, and implementing a sustainable DIB partnership with a willing nation. The author concludes with a case study of how a design-thinking approach facilitated the transformation of Romania's SOF—a priority DIB effort for Special Operations Command Europe.

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JSOU Quick Look: Ethics by Kari Thyne and Joseph Long

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) Quick Look series is a research initiative intended to provide an overview of key topics and issues of interest to members of the USSOCOM enterprise. In this Quick Look on ethics by JSOU faculty members Dr. Kari Thyne and Dr. Joseph Long, the authors explore the non-binary aspect of ethical decision-making in Special Operations Forces (SOF) environments. They establish a common vocabulary for discussing ethics in SOF operations and propose a way to develop necessary and useful tools that close the gap between the expectation and reality of what SOF operators must do. The authors conclude by proposing six SOF ethical decision-making truths to provide an anchor for ethical decision-making within SOF units.



JSOU Quick Look: Strategic Communication by Paul Lieber

In this Quick Look on strategic communication by JSOU Resident Senior Fellow Dr. Paul Lieber, the author explains what strategic communication is, why it is useful, how it can be used to change behavior, and how organizations can develop existing communication into strategic communication. The author begins with two examples of China's strategic communication initiatives regarding its territorial claims in the South China Sea: one medium used was a recently produced children's movie while the other was US broadcaster ESPN's television coverage of the National Basketball Association's exhibition games played in China in early 2020. Dr. Lieber concludes with eight steps that are required to reorient existing communication into true strategic communication.

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Call for Submissions

The *Combating Terrorism Exchange* (CTX) is a quarterly peer-reviewed journal. We accept submissions of nearly any type, from anyone; however, submission does not guarantee publication. Our aim is to distribute high-quality analyses, opinions, and studies to military officers, government officials, and security and academic professionals in the counterterrorism community. We give priority to non-typical, insightful work and to topics concerning countries with the most pressing terrorism and CT issues.

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